THE KING OF DUPES by GEORGES SURDEZ

Adventure

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ROGER SUDDEN
by THOMAS H. RADDALL

A "KOROPOK" STORY
by SIDNEY HERSCHEL SMALL

LEONARD H. NASON
EDMUND GILLIGAN
AND MANY MORE

DECEMBER 1944

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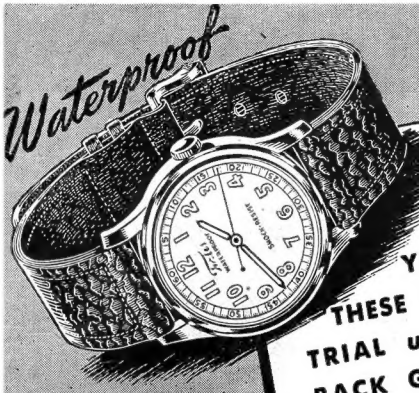

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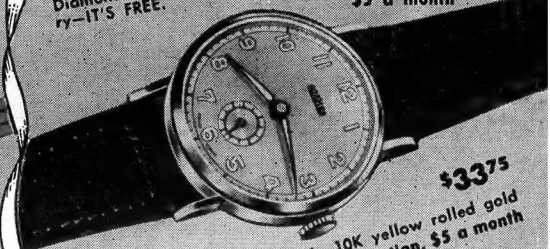

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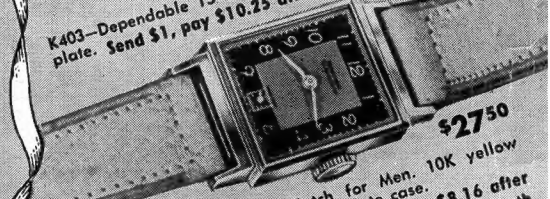

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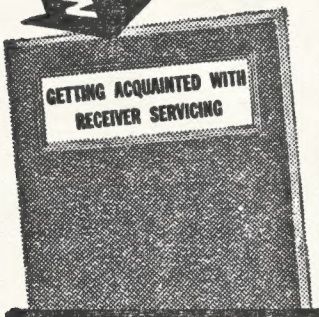

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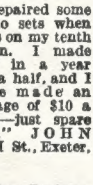

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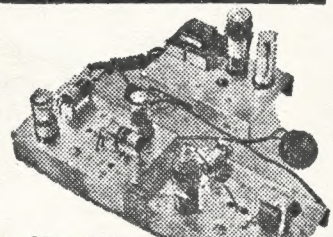

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Adventure
(Registered U. S. Patent Office)

Vol. 112, No. 2 for Best of New Stories

December, 1944

NOVELETTES

The King of Dupes..... GEORGES SURDEZ 46

Spying is a banal, sordid business and those who practise it do so strictly from hunger—for the dough that's in it. At least most of them do. Girbal was the exception. But all he got for his patriotic gesture was twenty years in the green hell of Guiana and a chance to work for the Gestapo when he finally returned to France. *Le roi des poires* they called him—king of suckers—but a prize fish can sometimes turn the lure into boomerang bait and hook the angler who's been casting for him.

Belt of Steel..... SIDNEY HERSCHEL SMALL 102

Were you right, or was I?—Andy. That was all there was to the message the old Korean passed to Lew Davies, masquerading as Koropok, the pariah Ainu, in the streets of Tokyo. It was the American's first contact with G-2 since he'd come to Japan. Now with Yank fighting strength poised to strike at the heart of Nippon, Davies knew he had to get an answer back—but fast—and the only way to manage that was via Radio Tokyo. But first, of course, he had to decipher the query, for he didn't have the faintest idea what Andy needed to know.

SHORT STORIES

Oil Field Liar..... MODY C. BOATRIGHT 43

More "tall tales" of Gib Morgan which make the lumberjack legends of Paul Bunyan and Pecos Bill's fabulous exploits on the Texas plains seem feeble fibs by comparison.

Sicilian Fish Story..... LEONARD H. NASON 82

Bazooka Bill hadn't had a pass since his outfit landed in Oran, but now that Sicily was wiped up, 5% of American personnel were being granted leaves. And Bill wasn't taking any chances on that fraction of his own company figuring out to 8½ men with him being the half a guy who wouldn't get to go. He'd been caught that way before.

A Bet Is a Bet..... EDWIN KLEIN 94

Sergeant Canarsie and his pal Jablonski were spending the weekend in a foxhole about two hundred yards from the Nips and shooting the breeze as usual. "Ten bucks against my next month's pay you can't crawl out and bring a Skibby prisoner back barehanded," Ski said. And an hour later Canarsie was sliding head-first into a Jap listening post.

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BE OUT ON DECEMBER 8TH ◆ ◆ ◆

The Leader's Portion..... WILLIAM MARSHALL RUSH 96
Abalo, the coyote, had generaled his band of vicious killers on many a successful foray, waxing fat on the choicest tidbits of each raid while the others had to be content with the leavings. Then came the day on the ice-swollen Arrow River when his troop turned and tore its master to shreds. This too was the leader's portion, for even the wiliest predator can run at the head of the pack only so long as he keeps it away from starvation trails.

SERIALS

Roger Sudden (1st of 5 parts).....THOMAS H. RADDALL 12
Bonnie Prince Charlie's star had dimmed and now there was nothing left for those who loved "the king across the water" but the hangman's noose—or the colonies. Young Sudden, scion of a washed-out Kentish family, chose "Ameriky"—and immediately began to wonder whether he had picked the lesser of two evils after all. Those dregs and scourings of the London slums who were to be his shipmates on the *Fair Lady* resembled gallows meat far more than they did builders of a brave new world.

Captains Don't Cry (conclusion).....EDMUND GILLIGAN 122
It's journey's end for the *Golden Hind*. Her great sails furled forever, her dories piled on the wharf in Gloucester, gaffs and gobsticks stowed away to gather cobwebs through the long years, the last lady of the topsail schooner fishing fleet goes home—having won the right to begin a new life of her own choosing with the only captain who really loved and understood her at her helm.

THE FACT STORY

Horse-Sense..... JOHN RICHARD YOUNG 91
The Old-Timer has lived on and with horses for fifty years and run into plenty of dumb ones—almost as many as he's met among the human breed. But no one can tell him that the average horse hasn't a heap more sense than most of the two-legged jackrabbits who try bossing him and like to look down on him as a poor dumb brute.

VERSE

Cow Tracks..... MAURICE OGDEN 81
When you settle down to bat the breeze and slug a can o' beer,
Who's the one you hate the most when he cocks his snoopin' ear?
It's the sergeant with the bucky bandoleer!

DEPARTMENTS

The Camp-Fire..... Where readers, writers and adventurers meet 6
Ask Adventure.....Information you can't get elsewhere 137
Ask Adventure Experts.....The men who furnish it 140
Lost Trails..... Where old paths cross 145
The Trail Ahead.....News of next month's issue 101

Cover painted for Adventure by Charles DeFeo
Kenneth S. White, Editor

IF YOUR COPY OF THIS MAGAZINE IS LATE—

We regret that, due to the difficulties of wartime transportation, your *Adventure* may sometimes be a little late in reaching you. If this should happen, your patience will be appreciated. Please do not write complaining of the delay. It occurs after the magazine leaves our offices and is caused by conditions beyond our control.

—The Publishers.

THE CAMP-FIRE

Where Readers, Writers and Adventurers Meet

IN the Halifax *Herald* for Oct. 14, 1942, appeared the following sketch of the career of the author of "Roger Sudden" which we start publishing this month.

Thomas H. Raddall was born in the married quarters of the British Army School of Musketry at Hythe, near Folkstone, England (where his father was an instructor on the staff) and learned to walk in the barrack square. When Raddall, Sr. transferred to the Canadian Army in 1913 the family removed to Halifax and has lived in Nova Scotia ever since. Raddall, Sr. served in France with the Canadians from 1914 to 1918, was twice wounded, thrice mentioned in despatches, awarded the D.S.O., and was killed while leading the 8th Winnipeg Rifles into action at Amiens in August, 1918. His name is inscribed on the war memorial of old St. Paul's, Halifax.

Young Raddall went to Halifax public schools and on his father's death left the Halifax Academy to enlist. He was then 15. He became a wireless operator and served on board the transports *War Karma* and *Prince George* and the cableship *Mackay Bennett* among other ships. Later he served on various radio stations along the Nova Scotia coast, including Sable Island, the "Graveyard of the Atlantic," where he spent a year.

After four years of this roving life he returned to Halifax, took a course in accountancy, and got a job in a small pulp mill in the woods of Queens County. There, after some years of rubbing shoulders with mill hands, lumberjacks, hunters, anglers and Indians he began to experiment with short stories of Nova Scotian country life, and of the sea.

His first "break" came in 1933, when George Blackwood of *Blackwood's Magazine* began to publish a series of Raddall's tales in his famous monthly. These tales attracted considerable attention and brought the author many congratulatory letters, among them a warm note of praise from the late John Buchan. Buchan's friendly interest continued until his death, and when in 1939 a dozen of the *Blackwood* tales appeared in book form under the title "The Pied Piper of Dipper Creek," Buchan (by that time Lord Tweedsmuir and Governor-General of Canada) wrote a generous foreword for the book.

Since publication of the "Pied Piper" Mr. Raddall has devoted his entire time to writing. His short stories have appeared frequently in *Adventure, Blackwood's Magazine, Maclean's, Collier's, the Saturday Evening Post,* and various newspapers and periodicals.

A tale from Thomas Raddall's pen was selected for the annual book of *Saturday Evening Post* short stories in 1940, and another in 1941; his work has been chosen for British anthologies of the short story, and selected work has been translated into Braille.

A series of Nova Scotia historical tales brought much praise, and such widely separate personalities as John Buchan, Colonel Theodore Roosevelt Jr., and American author Kenneth Roberts urged Raddall to put his flair for history into a novel.

He preferred the short story form for some years but in the summer of 1941 he resolved to write a novel of Nova Scotia during the American Revolution, when its inhabitants were largely settlers from New England. The outcome was "His Majesty's Yankees," brought out by Doubleday Doran in the autumn of 1942, and at once acclaimed as "the historical fiction discovery of the year."

Thomas Raddall's hobbies are hunting and fishing.

He is an authority on the Micmac Indians and their remains in Nova Scotia, and is a trustee of the Queens County Historical Society. Apart from his public writings he has, in collaboration with Colonel C. H. L. Jones, produced books on the Norse voyages to America, and on the Nova Scotia privateers in the Napoleonic wars; these books were in limited editions for private issue. He occasionally broadcasts over the Canadian national network on Nova Scotian subjects.

He is a lieutenant in the 2nd Battalion (Reserve) West Nova Scotia Regiment, and is a charter member of Branch No. 38, Canadian Legion.

He and his wife have their home in Liverpool, Nova Scotia, with their two chil-

(Continued on page 8)

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(Continued from page 6)

dren, Frances and Thomas, Jr.—to whom "His Majesty's Yankees" was dedicated.

The above covers the author's career to 1942. Since then he has won the Governor-General's Award (1943), the highest honor for Canadian literature, and completed (1944) his second historical novel, "Roger Sudden," a tale revolving around the founding of Halifax and the second siege of Louisbourg—the first step in the conquest of Canada by the British. This book will be published in Canada by McClelland and Stewart, and in the United States by Doubleday Doran.

In next month's *Camp-Fire* we will print excerpts from an interesting letter from Mr. Raddall telling something of the background of his novel and of the research problems involved in gathering material at various historical Canadian battlegrounds.

THREE new names on our contents page this month—a versifier, an article writer and a fictioneer. Edwin Klein—Captain Edwin Klein, USMC—who joins our Writers' Brigade with "A Bet Is a Bet" is from Paulsboro, N. J., a graduate of Lehigh University and still in his twenties. He had a reserve commission from Lehigh and went into the Marine Corps from college. He has been overseas since December of last year and was with the Marines in their landings on Saipan and Guam. We'd like to give you more details but we can't ask Captain Klein to leave his work even long enough to introduce himself properly at *Camp-Fire*.

JOHN RICHARD YOUNG who gives us "Horse-Sense" on page 91 writes—

> I've moseyed around, some: Canada and our own West and some of the North Woods country. And since I've been able to straddle our first Irish terrier I've been bugs, batty and loco about horses and riding—not merely riding but the ART of riding, culminating in the *haute école*. I studied for years under one of the greatest horsemen this world ever saw, the late Lt.-Col. M. F. McTaggart, who wrote many books on the subject.
>
> Most of the material in "Horse-Sense" I gathered over a period of many years from another grand horseman, as different from British McTaggart as night from day: the late "Couteau Gene" Stebbings, oldtime horse-rancher and once a contributor to *Adventure* ("Sway-Back," "The Albino Pony," etc.). I am writing Stebbings' biography and it's from that that "Horse-Sense" has been taken and revised slightly.
>
> One of my big ambitions is to find an editor who can see eye-to-eye with me on a horse story in which the horse does not think and act like a human being, and in which the horse's man or woman really knows something about horsemanship. Are you there? *(Right here! Put spurs to the typewriter, Rider Young, any time you've a mind to—K. S. W.)*
> *K. S. W.)*

AND Maurice Ogden, whose ballad "Cow Tracks" has an authentic GI lilt, we thought, writes—

> I grew up with the Greater Seminole Oilfield in central Oklahoma. After two and a half years at the University of Oklahoma I was drafted into the Army Air Corps where, after a year and a half, I became certain I was at least the second worst soldier in the history of organized warfare. Medically discharged a year ago this month I am at the moment head announcer and news editor of the University of Oklahoma's educational radio station, WNAD.
>
> "Cow Tracks" is a result of my unceasing fascination with army language. The GI idiom is, I think, the richest and most original little language within the English. It is, perhaps, unfortunate, that more of its thunderbolt imagery and surreal caricature is not suitable for magazine publication. My bunkmate at Sheppard Field, Texas (just reported missing in action in the European theater) had a startling flare for the apt alliteration, and he is responsible for the refrain line of the ballad.
>
> Now, there are sergeants and sergeants. One type is slow-witted and ponderous, but deadly up to two miles. The extent of his contribution to repartee seldom exceeds "The *hell* you say," and he is, therefore, of very little actual literary value. But the second type, the thwarted Dumas . . . there's a *sergeant* for you! He does things with a swagger. He is quick and gallant and his reprimand is a joy forever. His only regret is that the broadsword has gone out of fashion in warfare.
>
> He is the man who makes life in the army worth living. Of such is the kingdom of romantic literature.
>
> "Cow Tracks" is a term which a fond civilian public, composed chiefly of writers and radio speakers, likes to think GIs use when they mean "sergeant" or some equally insulting non-com appellative. Personally, I've never heard a joe worthy of the name utter the phrase. Incidentally, I have no idea what the "bucky" in the refrain line signifies, but this bunkie of mine coined the combination and I found it so fascinatingly alliterative that I couldn't resist using it. It's a rather apt descriptive, I think, for those unquenchably romantic three-stripers whose swashbuckling souls demand the heroic embellishment of a cartridge belt, whether the situation calls for it or not.

GEORGES SURDEZ sends along the following notations anent his long novel-

(Continued on page 10)

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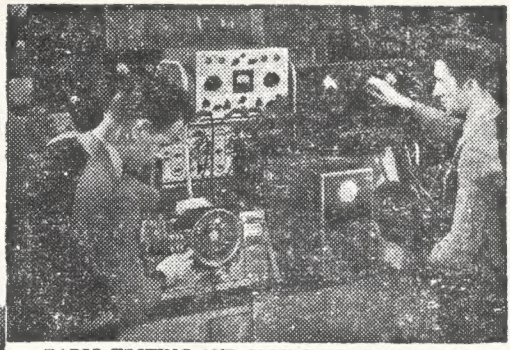

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(Continued from page 8)

ette of France in the throes of liberation. He says—

In writing "The King of Dupes," I could do the atmosphere from personal memory. The scene is in Eastern France—I imagined it in the Department of Jura—where invasion is not precisely a new phenomenon. As a small boy, living in various towns and villages, I heard many stories about partisans, francs-tireurs, etc. At that time, a man of forty-five could recall the campaign of 1870, and most men of sixty had taken some part in the bush fighting. And, during long winter evenings, eating boiled chestnuts, I listened to endless anecdotes, not only those of 1870-71, but of 1814-15, all tending to establish that local sojourn had not been a bed of roses for Uhlans, Dragoons, Hussars, Cossacks, or whatever.

My very own great-great-grandmother was biffed, in her own kitchen, by an Austrian officer, and she biffed back. The people of the Jura region are known to be lovers of liberty and provided with considerable truculence. Even in normal times, during peace, they have a dislike for outsiders in uniforms, such as gendarmes, customs guards, etc. Traditionally, they are smugglers and poachers. Arthur Young, the English writer, has his own tale of the Jura—and it happened near the chief city, Besançon, not in the high and remote mountains: "I saw a peasant pass the inn on horseback, followed by an officer of the *Garde Bourgeoise*, of which there are 1200 here, and 200 under arms, and his party-coloured detachment, and these by some infantry and cavalry. I asked, why the militia took the lead of the king's troops? 'For a very good reason,' they replied, 'The troops would be attacked and knocked on the head, but the populace will not resist the militia.'" That was in July 1789. As to the scenic beauty, the woods, the hills, the lakes, I don't imagine anything. John Ruskin admired the country, and he was not born there.

Since I wrote the story, the American Army has reached the region—yet when I started it, the occupation and liberation of the land seemed still remote. French forces have reached and retaken Maiche, where, in 1940, Polish Legionnaires made a heroic last stand. And I know that nowhere will the stories of patient resistance to the invaders during four long years be more thrilling than in the Jura. As far back as 1942, during the darkest days, partisans fought a pitched battle in the mountains, against the Nazis, killing more than two hundred. Last year, I met a man who had been there during the occupation. He'd made his way out through Spain and Portugal. I asked him if the Boches had soldiers in the mountains, and he nodded. "Yes. They're there all right. But—they don't laugh every day, you know."

In 1870-71, there was a country gentleman near Montbeliard who was known to have killed more than eighty Germans. A doctor from the Vesoul region, not far to the west, had accounted for more than two hundred—and the occupation that time had lasted but a few months. I wrote a yarn about him, many years ago, for *Adventure*—"Dregs of Defeat"—featuring one of his exploits, the capture of a "gold train" carrying the pay of the German forces.

In Besançon, one of my professors at school had been a franc-tireur in '70-'71. His chief exploits had been the smuggling of dispatches into besieged Belfort. But his favorite story was about his grandfather, who, with two other men, had ambushed and wiped out a patrol of Cossacks in 1814.

If it seems unlikely that the Germans would be unable to locate caves or other hiding places in the mountains, confer with any man from a mountainous land. As a very small boy, I had a disreputable friend who was a smuggler and a poacher, a grizzled, tough man about forty-five, as much at home in the open as any trapper or Indian. He liked me because his dog liked me. Well, gendarmes and guards, some of whom had been born in the region, could never find him, never corner him. He knew caves the existence of which had been forgotten by all others. Soot from torches was so thick on the walls, in spots, that you could write your name. He said they had been used by salt-smugglers until the Revolution. I have seen the cops within fifty yards of the entrance, looking about helplessly. As to what his dog knew and did, I hesitate to write—mountain people who know what a dog can be would shrug and say it was nothing new, while others would never believe me. For instance, sight unseen, he could differentiate between a gendarme and a customs guard and impart that knowledge to his master.

The story of Corporal Girbal is based on fact, of course. And it is true that the German Government exacted the freedom of those sentenced for espionage for the Reich. Among those liberated was the famous Klems, who deserted from the Foreign Legion to become Abd-el-Krim's chief-of-staff. I am sure that what that fellow did with his freedom will make a wonderful story, some time. Monsieur Belbenoit, author of "Dry Guillotine," told me some years back that Klems had reached Panama—since then, I've heard nothing. But it is likely that a resourceful chap like that found good employment for his native land.

I made that little spying business banal and sordid, because spying ordinarily is banal and sordid, utterly devoid of dramatics and romance. I was permitted at one time to witness the questioning of a spy—unofficially. The fellow was not a small time spy, either, had been on missions in India, etc. A fine linguist—he was a German—he spoke French as well as anyone present, and English with less accent than myself. What struck me was how often

(Continued on page 138)

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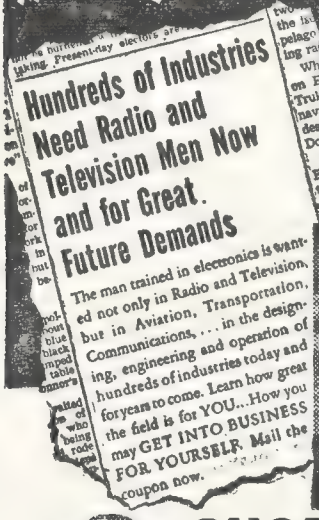

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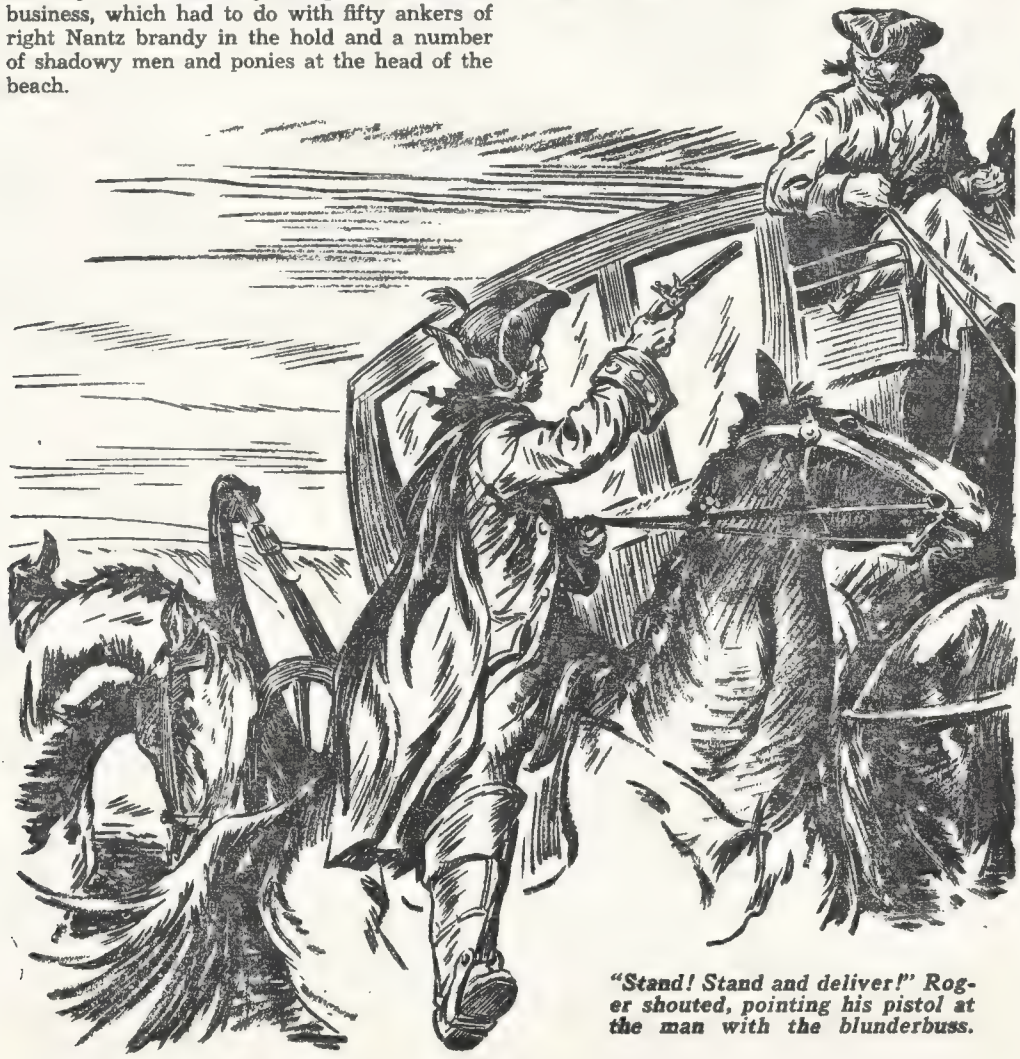
ROGER

By THOMAS

IT WAS not the homecoming of his dreams; but then so many of his dreams had come to nothing in the past three years. And he had grown used to furtive journeys. Only details differed enough to mark these one from another—details and destination. This time it was England, after all the wandering. A small and frowzy lugger had carried him across the Channel and set him afoot by Romney Marsh in the early winter dark. The crew had pointed the way to New Romney and gone about their business, which had to do with fifty ankers of right Nantz brandy in the hold and a number of shadowy men and ponies at the head of the beach.

At New Romney the last of his money got him a horse—a poor galled beast worn out, he suspected, in the brandy trade—and a saddle that a gypsy would have spat upon; but he was in no position to bargain and no mood to walk. The horse-coper gave him a dram for good measure and with the nag between his knees and the brandy glowing under his belt, he jogged along the dark road whistling *Aupres de ma Blonde* and thinking of the look on his brother's face.



"Stand! Stand and deliver!" Roger shouted, pointing his pistol at the man with the blunderbuss.

SUDDEN

H. RADDALL

There would be no father to give him a prodigal's welcome, for that merry, drunken squire had died last year. This he had learned abroad from a wandering man of Kent. His mother had died of child-bed fever when he was born. Brother Charles had inherited Suddenholt, together with his father's debts, his father's thirst, and his father's younger son—liabilities all. He grinned when he thought of that.

Earth and sky were one bowl of ink, with a keen wind across the marshes from the east, and presently it began to rain, a few hard-flung drops at first, then a torrent slanting on the wind. His cloak whipped about him for another mile or two and then became too sodden to flap any more. Water seeped into his big jack-boots and bubbled between his toes at every wriggle of his chilled feet in the stirrups. He took off his hat to unbutton its high French cocks and let the rain run out of its gutters, and rode on with the great brims hanging and flapping like an old wife's bonnet come untied. A wild night, but he had lived too close to the weather for too many months to care very much about it now. What mattered was that it was English rain, aye, Kentish rain, with a wind over the Downs that smelled of Kentish sea and Kentish earth. The mud that splat-

ILLUSTRATED BY HARVE STEIN

tered the poor hack's legs was Kent itself, the good brown flesh of it.

It was something to be a man of Kent. He had decided that early in his Oxford days when one of the exquisites who lorded it in those halls of learning had twitted him for having a smell of hops. He had given the fop a bloody nose and told him to be careful how he sniffed a Sudden and a man of Kent. Thereafter he was known as "Sudden" Sudden. He had lived up to it so far. He smiled a little in the rain. Forethought had never been one of his virtues. Even this journey home had been undertaken on the spur of the moment, the outcome of a fit of melancholy in a small Italian town. The girl Simonetta had wept and implored in the dramatic Italian manner, but he had kissed her firmly and taken one of her new green silk garters to bind his queue and gone. She would find other lovers, as she had before. For himself, the world was full of women, none of whom mattered very much.

He was a little appalled when he thought how many there had been. He could not even remember all their names. He had taken what they offered, pleasantly, and gone his way. Not without adventure. There had been jealous husbands and other inconveniences. There had been blows and swordplay, stones flung and cudgels wielded in the darkness of foreign streets, and once an absurd affair of pistols at fifteen paces on the riverbank outside a French garrison town. These matters, like the women, he had taken carelessly. His heart was his own and his mind was always on the Chevalier, for, like many another Jacobite in exile, he had found King James too cold a man for worship. Three years he had followed Prince Charlie's one bright star. And now he was going home.

AT BOULOGNE he had picked his day and his passage carefully, lolling on the quays, sipping brandy with luggermen in the cabarets of La Beurrière. The chosen day was January thirtieth, when in Jacobite clubs the length and breadth of England men would be gathering to drink to the memory of Charles the Martyr—and the health of the king "over the water." Such a club had been founded by his father, on the lines of the famous Cycle, meeting in rotation at the homes of its members within a compass of fifteen miles. And so he had reckoned on a landing just after sundown, a decent piece of horseflesh and a frosty road to put him in Suddenholt not later than ten of the clock.

These nice calculations had gone amiss. The lugger had lost time in dodging a revenue cutter off Dungeness, the horse was fit for the crows, and the weather not fit for a dog. The road was at its wintry worst. He would arrive at midnight at the very earliest and, short of a miracle, the Club would be far too drunk for his business. Fortune of war! He shrugged his wet shoulders and spurred the melancholy nag. Slowly they drew out of the flatlands into the woods and pastures of the Weald. An eternity passed before he rode out of the wood above the village and saw a few late candles pricking the dusk in the hollow. But his mind's eye could see the place as if it were daylight—the cobbled street, the old half-timbered houses and shops clustered about the marketplace, and the tall church tower rising grandly out of the huddle.

In his boyhood the church had fascinated him. He remembered the mounting-stone with its five steps for portly horsemen like his father, the massive oak door, the queer carven woman-faces that ornamented the ends of the chancel arch, the great oak pulpit with its marvelous carving done in the time of Queen Bess; the painting of Saint Michael weighing souls and the evil spirits trying to pull down the little mannikin in the scales, the altar rail carved like a twist of rope twelve inches round, the heavy oaken pews and choir benches—all wood from the Weald, all the work of village craftsmen going back through centuries. When he thought of it now, with his new-found cynicism, he wondered what sort of men were able to put pleasure behind them for so long a time and for so little reward.

But now he saw the dark bulk of Suddenholt, aloof in its hundred acres, with the avenue of oaks and beeches tossing a wild tangle of naked branches across the lit panes of the lower chambers. The big wrought-iron gates were closed. He rode up to them, drew the handle of his riding crop sharply across the bars and hailed the porter's lodge inside. "Crockham! Crockham! I say, Crockham! Crock! Open up!"

Silence. Another rattle and another shout. The lodge door opened and an old man came, wrapped against the rain in a moth-eaten watchcoat that might have served him soldiering in Queen Anne's wars. One lean hand clutched the faded cloth about his skinny throat and the other held a lantern before him. The lantern's bottom kept his legs in darkness and his torso seemed to move on invisible wheels towards the gate, an uncanny spectacle. He held the fluttering light up to the gate and peered.

The delicate black ironwork of the gate was a thing of beauty then, wet and glistening in the flickering gleam, and Roger felt a warmth within. Good Kentish iron, dug out of the earth, smelted over furnace fires of charcoal from the Weald itself, and hammered and wrought by stout-armed and cunning-handed smiths in the forest forges generations ago. Or was it centuries? He had never been very good at history. It was enough to be part of it—a Sudden, a Man of Kent (for "Kentish

men" were another breed), a son of the great White Horse—*Invicta!*

"Who are you?" he cried, and then, "I know. You're old Kittle from the village?"

The old soldier blinked and muttered, dazzled by the lantern's fuzzy radiance in the rainy dark.

"Why, Kittle," the horseman said, "you're drunk!"

"Like master, like servant," returned Kittle, intelligently enough.

"Damn your impudence, Kittle! Let me in and get back to your bottle."

"Not without the word, I don't. Nunno! Gentlemen's meetin' and I got me orders."

"Umph! Well, unless it's changed since I last tipped a bottle with the gentlemen, the word is *Fiat. Fiat,* Kittle, then. *Fiat,* ye drunken fool!"

The toper set the lantern down with care, fumbled, brought forth the big key at the end of a belt-chain. The lock clicked, the bolts were drawn and the gates slowly swung wide. The rider passed through and pulled up the horse, looking down at the fuddled wretch fastening the gates. The old man turned and held up his light.

"You're young Roger! Home from your jackanapesing. And none the better for it, I'll warrant. Face brown as a carter's, ecod! Where've ye been?"

Roger grinned and chanted in the singsong of the nursery rhyme, "Been to London to see the Queen."

Kittle spat. "No queen in London now but that High Dutch woman. Don't doubt there was a woman in it, though."

Roger nodded towards the house and the drenched brim of his hat flapped wetly. "Is it—ah—the usual?"

"Aye, too damn usual for the good o' Sud'n-'olt." And vindictively, "And them that works for Sud'n'olt. Parson's there, and Sir Jeremy and Mr. Frampold and that feller Cheveril as I never did like, and—"

"Where's Cousin Penny?"

"Off to stay the night wi' Miss Boyce at Den-'urst. She's allus sent away when there's to be an evenin's drinkin'. Or hev ye forgot, young Roger?" Kittle chuckled. "Never did see a young gen'leman drink like you, from time ye was seventeen. And I've seen fair drinkin' in me day, what wi' your father diggin' his own grave wi' the bottlescrew, and your brother and the rest—"

"Never mind that! My brother's well, I take it?"

The porter leered. "Oh, he's well, is Charles. Holds his wine well, Charlie does. Allus had a stiffer head than your'n. Experience—him ten year older and all . . . Ye sat a better saddle, Roger, I'll say that."

"Get indoors," Roger said curtly, "before you

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catch your death." He put spur to the Romney hostler's nag and sprang away toward the house lights under the heavy drip of the trees.

THE stables were deaf to his shouts. He swung a cramped leg to the ground and groped his way inside. The stalls were filled with the horses of his brother's guests. He walked carefully past the row of tail-switching rumps in the dark, whistling softly for Anne and Colonel and Gloss and Dainty without the ghost of a whicker in reply. He had an alien feeling, as if he had walked into a room full of strangers. A dozen leaks in the ancient roof were pattering on the flags. The crazy doors and shutters rattled and thumped in the gusts. The wind thrust cold fingers into the warm, horse-reeking gloom. The place was a ruin. The stables had needed repair as long as he could remember, but never so much as now. He went out and tethered the Romney nag to the old iron hook by the door. He was tempted to walk down to the kennels to see if the dogs would know him in the dark, but he put that aside. The dogs could wait.

He set his face toward the house, his heavy boots splashing in the rain pools on the worn flagstones. He went in by the servants' door, his favorite entrance from the stables in the old days. In the kitchen he found an old woman he had never seen before, sitting over a gin bottle by the hearth.

"Who are you?" he demanded. She was a filthy thing.

"Faggott," she announced after a long stare.

"Where's Bramshaw?"

The hag chuckled. "Gone a twelvemonth. Dunno as I blame 'im, neither. No wages for a matter o' five year. Same wi' the Marsden man and his 'ooman. More kicks than ha'pence to Sud'n'olt nowadays."

"Where's the stable boy?"

"Where?" She leered, and gestured with the bottle toward the front of the house. "Ye'll find stable boy in there, pretty man. Ye mayn't see 'un right off, like, but ye'll find 'un, ye'll find 'un!" Her voice trailed off in a long tipsy giggle that went on and on behind him as he swung away.

A single candle guttered at the end of the draughty hall. In the east drawing room he found three common tallow dips burned down to their butts in a brass candelabrum gone green for want of polishing. The long-untrimmed wicks drooped like shepherds' crooks. In such a light all things must look unkempt, but there was something frowzy and unclean here, as if a succession of slatterns had swept dirt into the corners for months on end and gone their ways. The west drawing-room door was closed, and a low buzz of voices came from behind it. He rapped on the panel and stepped inside. The wet folds of his cloak muffled him still and the drooping cocks of the big French hat concealed his face.

The scene within was comfortable and familiar. Here at least nothing had been changed. The shades of poverty and neglect which in his father's time had begun to creep on Suddenholt like a winter mist out of the woods had never darkened this chamber, and there was no sign of them now. Silver gleamed on the whiteness of good linen and gave back the glow of the great six-branched candelabrum on the table. The dishes of dinner, doubtless begun at the fashionable hour of four, had been cleared away and a pretty array of his father's wine-glasses marched in file about the great round board. Each of those fine-drawn glasses with their lovely air-twisted stems was engraved with the royal Stuart cipher and a verse of *God Save Great James Our King.*

In the midst of it all sat the mighty silver bowl, filled with water for the rite of the supreme toast. Over such bowls tonight, in such meetings as this, the Jacobites of all England were clinking glasses of smuggled French wine and crying, "The King!" Roger wondered cynically what would happen if they could see "over the water" to that royal refugee in Rome. These convivial scenes were as far removed from the austere and gloomy exile in the Palazzo Muti as earth from heaven.

The tall case-clock in the hall struck one. The Club had been drinking long. The chamber was thick with tobacco fumes, fresh and blue in the light of the candles or hanging in stale gray wreaths about the seated figures like a ground mist on an autumn morning. Some of the long clays were cold and laid aside, the owners probably under the table. He could see a pair of stout legs protruding in wrinkled silk stockings and silver-buckled shoes. A snuffbox had scattered its contents over the carpet and there was a litter of pale fragments where a pipe had fallen. On the long mahogany sideboard against the old dark wainscoting stood his father's fine flint glass decanters, each with its ivory ticket hung on a silver chain about the neck to announce the wine within. All were empty now, and the table was littered with dusty bottles straight from the cellar, some standing, others scattered like ninepins amongst the pipes and corks and bottlescrews.

A dozen guests had sat down to dine, apparently, and three had succumbed. He could hear them snoring under the board. Others would soon be there. He surveyed them all with a dark contempt: Parson Balleter with his round red face and his sober black surtout and waistcoat; Gilbert Royce of Amblemere; lean Barcombe Tarver in his great full-bottomed wig; Sir John Harroll, sitting drunk and solemn as he sat so often in Parliament; the young fop, Harry Storer, in a blue frockcoat with gold buttons, a water-silk waistcoat trimmed with silver, red velvet breeches and silk stockings;

Barry Cheveril in a Spencer tie-wig; round, purple-faced Charles Frampold; pale, moon-faced Baxter Rivers in a white coat with plate buttons, gold brocade waistcoat and white satin breeches, all stained with claret; old Sir Jeremy Waystrode with his periwig's forelock brushed three inches high, in the fashion of King Charles the Second.

They stared at him stupidly, Sir Jeremy with mouth agape and his queer false teeth of carven ivory grinning like the teeth of a skull. But Roger's brother rose and faced him, frowning and defiant.

Three years had not changed Charles very much. Indeed, a lifetime's self-indulgence had left surprisingly few marks upon him, though his handsome face was flushed and swollen with this night's drinking. His eyes were bloodshot but steady. The suspicion of a paunch spoiled the cut of his pink silk coat and gold-embroidered waistcoat, but he carried his shapely bag-wigged head in the Sudden manner, poised and sure, and he had a huntsman's shoulders.

The others looked like a parcel of schoolboys caught at some guilty game. It occurred to Roger that they did not know him in the cloak and the drooping hat. He tossed them off.

"God's blood!" Charles cried. "It's our Roger!"

CHAPTER II

GOD SAVE KING JAMES!

THERE never had been much love between the brothers. They were too much alike, though Charles was ten years older. Both had the bold, black Sudden eyes and the paradoxical family nose, curved and sharp yet small and shapely, that had in it all the Sudden history—robber Norman at root, with privileges won in the train of the Conqueror, a hard temper softened a little by marriage with the pleasant Kentish women and polished by centuries of ease at the cost of their tenants' sweat, but not too far refined for rude enjoyments; and the strong, thick-fingered Sudden hands, the ploughman's hands, that went so oddly with their small neat heads and narrow feet.

"Have you supped?" Charles said easily.

Roger was amused. He might have returned from an afternoon's ride. "On the road, after a fashion. I could do with a dram, though. Where's the stable boy?"

"Here, sir!" said a muffled voice. A freckled face and shock-haired head appeared from beneath the board, thrusting up the hanging tablecloth in a sort of cowl that gave him a ludicrous look of a monk.

"What's he doing there?" Roger demanded.

Charles shrugged. His voice was cool and even, his tongue a little thick. "To loosen the gentlemen's neckcloths when they fall out of their chairs. Done in the best Cycles nowadays, I assure you. Brann, go and put up my brother's horse."

The boy scrambled forth.

"What'll you have to drink, Roger?" Charles went on. "We're sticking to claret, of course, in the fashion of the Club. But there's some good Mountain in the sideboard and a very fair Madeira."

"Madeira, thanks."

There was an empty chair by Charles' own and Roger sat and poured himself a glass. A stupid silence hung over the guests. They were far gone.

Roger murmured, "I should have come earlier."

"Don't you think," Charles snapped, "you've played your little mystery long enough, Roger? After all, it's been three years or more. You owe an explanation, I think. But perhaps"—he ran a glance about the board—"perhaps we could talk a bit in private. My guests will excuse us, I think."

He led the way into the library, where a sea-coal fire had sunk to gray ash and the candles were at their last. "Now, my lad, stop posing like a play-actor and let's have it all—why you decamped from the university, where you've been and why you've come back now like a thief in the night."

"I've a few questions of my own to be answered first. What's happened to Suddenholt? How did Father die? Where are the horses? The old servants?"

"Ha! Well, Father died in a drunken fit, if ye must know, young Roger. Under his own table. Wore a fine cambric neckcloth that night and choked to death for want of someone to loosen it. That's why I keep a boy under the board when there's to be serious drinking. Don't look at me like that. What d'ye expect when a dozen full-blooded men sit down to thirty or forty bottles of Margaux?"

"A number of things. For one, when the heir of Suddenholt provides forty Margaux at a sitting he must sell his horses to pay for 'em, and let repairs go hang and—"

"My dear Roger, the heir of Suddenholt inherited nothing but debts. As a matter of fact, Father sold the horses. I merely sold the dogs."

"Ah!"

"The old servants left because they couldn't get their wages, and the new ones are insolent because they know they won't get theirs. Now d'ye understand? I tell you, Roger, the moneylenders begin to hover over Suddenholt like crows about a corpse. The only thing that keeps 'em off is Cousin Penny's money."

"I see. And what'll Cousin Penny live on when you've poured the last of her money down your throat?"

Charles' black eyes glittered. "Don't take that tone with me, Roger. Who are you to criti-

cize? The money you had at Oxford was Cousin Penny's, if ye come to the fine point—Father was borrowing from her funds with one hand and paying your bills with the other. And for what value! You quit the university—for some woman, I don't doubt. The price of an education flung away on tapsters and a trollop!"

Roger laughed. His teeth showed white and even. "We'll be at each other's throats in a moment, and I think I should warn you that I've learned the art of slitting throats since I left home. You see, my dear brother, I quit the university for Prince Charlie's army."

"Eh?"

"Why so astonished? A good Jacobite should fight for his rightful king, shouldn't he? Or should he? You were too busy drinking King James' health to join the fight for his son's. You and the others . . ." Roger waved a disdainful hand towards the other chamber.

"Suppose," Charles said coldly, "you tell me your adventures. I'm sure they must be interesting."

"That's handsome of you, Charles. The word is misadventures. I joined the Manchester Regiment, the only Jacks in all England willing to put their sentiments to the test of the sword."

"And the hang rope, surely? I seem to remember Prince Charles left his Englishman in the lurch."

"HE asked 'em to guard his retreat and they did. After their capture the Manchester officers were hanged and the men flung into jail and transported to the colonies. I escaped from Carlisle the night before the surrender and made my way through Scotland to the Prince's army. I stood with him at Culloden, and wandered through the Highlands with him for a time afterward. When he went to Syke, I remained in the north. I spent a year in the heather altogether—an education in itself, Charles. The Highlanders drink a cordial they call *usquebaugh*, not a bit like Margaux; and they drink the King's health with a foot on the table, standing up like men, you understand, and not down on one knee like you old-fashioned cavaliers. A remarkable people, not without their points.

"I made my way at last through the Isles to Derry, and then southward afoot the length of Ireland. From Cork I took ship—there was some formality about scrubbing decks and hoisting sails and I was a long time getting the tar off my hands—and got to France, and so to the Prince's side again. It's not much to talk about, really."

"I see. And now England's patched up a peace with France, and by the terms of it France agrees to expel the Stuarts and all their works, and so you've come home."

"Try not to sound so smug about it, Charles. The game's not over yet. The Chevalier was arrested and thrust out of France like a leper, true. And, true, there was sanctuary for him at his father's house in Rome. But Prince Charlie's not the man to sit and moon in Italy with swords to be drawn and his father's throne to win. When I left him a fortnight ago, he contemplated a return to Paris in disguise. More—he intends a visit to London."

"You're not serious!"

"This year or next."

"For God's sake, why?"

"For the reason I've come myself. To meet some of the Jacobites of England, to find out where they stand and how much they mean. To be or not to be, that is the question. Will you and your friends cry '*Fiat*' then, Charles?" He could not keep the malice from his voice.

"The thing's impossible!" Charles uttered harshly. "Has he learned nothing from '45?"

"Nothing."

"And you want an answer to take back to him, is that it?"

"I want an answer. Whether I take it to the Chevalier or not depends on the nature of it. If it's no, there's an end to everything, for I've no mind to wander up and down the Continent watching him drift from drink to women and from women to perdition. I'd rather remember him as I knew him first. If you could have seen him then, Charles! On the road to London at the head of his little army, wearing a short tartan coat and kilt, and the order and emblem of the thistle, and with the white rose of the Stuarts in his bonnet—by Heaven, there was a man!" Roger's dark face glowed under the brown. "He looked like a prince out of a book, and had the manner. Yet he'd be first to ford a stream in the frosty Highland mornings, and he lay down in his plaid at nightfall like any rough ghillie on the hillside."

"And yet," Charles said, "he fled when all was lost and left the Scots to hang and bleed for their faith in him."

A hot blaze sprang in Roger's eyes. "That remark would cut your throat today, Charles, anywhere between Clyde and Moray Firth, for all the hanging and the bleeding! But that's your answer, is it? You won't lift a finger, much less a sword, if the Chevalier should come to England? Is that the mind of all the Jacks you know?"

His brother answered frigidly, "My good Roger, our allegiance is to King James—"

"Who sits in Rome and counts his beads!"

"Precisely. He doesn't want the throne. So why should we put our necks into the noose for some wild whim of his son's?"

"And all this"— Roger waved a hand towards the far chamber—"all this huggermuggery, this drinking to a king over the water?"

"A sentiment. Towards something that was charming and is dead."

Roger stood up and put aside his glass half-tasted.

"Where are you going?" Charles said indifferently.

"To bed and to sleep, if those guests of yours don't howl too loudly."

"And in the morning?"

"I leave England for good."

Charles was silent a moment. A nerve twitched in his cheek. "Why, Roger?"

Roger paused, feet planted apart in the heavy riding boots, his old blue frockcoat opened carelessly, his hands rammed deep in the waistcoat pockets.

"Because," he said deliberately.

"A woman's reason! What shall I tell my friends?"

"I could give 'em a dozen man-reasons. None would afford 'em any satisfaction. Say I've no wish to live in an England that suffers a German king and hasn't the spine to fight for her own."

"Too heroic, Roger. A line from a bad play."

"Then say the prodigal found the parable askew—the swine at home and the welcome abroad."

"And that's insulting."

Roger sauntered to the door. Over his shoulder he said carelessly, "Why not tell 'em the truth?"

"And what is that?"

"That all honest men in England and Scotland have been hanged or transported to the colonies, that I didn't care to be hanged, that I've gone to join the others."

The door slammed at his spurred heels.

THE hag in the kitchen got Roger a breakfast of sorts. There was no sign of the other servants, nor of Charles. The sun was barely over the edge of the Weald, a wintry sun that poured a pale yellow light over the east slates of the roof and struck fire from the raindrops hanging from the eave-spouts. The weather was clearing with a great hurrying of dark clouds across the sky, and the air gave a hint of frost by nightfall.

The stables were empty save for the New Romney horse. The poor nag looked quite at home in that ruin by daylight, a rack of bones wrapped in a galled hide and fitted with head and tail. It gave him a whicker of welcome and accepted the old wooden saddle with resignation.

Three miles along the road he heard a clatter of hoofs ahead and saw an apparition of a coach and pair coming towards him along a lower level where the morning mist hung thick. Only the coachman and the dew-wet top of the coach and the tips of the horses' ears were visible, swimming in the vapor. Roger pulled up at the roadside and as the horses strained up the hill into sight, he recognized the venerable equipage of Sir Miles Boyce of Denhurst.

He swept off his hat, chiefly to allay the suspicions of the wary coachman, and held up his open hand.

The fellow pulled up with a tremendous "Whoa! Whoa-hoa!" The panel of the door flew open and out popped Cousin Penelope's head, each eye a large round inquiry. Roger swung to the ground and went over to her, smiling.

"Roger?" Cousin Penny said. "Roger! Oh, my dear!"

She was not changed. Her cheeks were as thin and sallow as he remembered them, the lips as tremulous, the eyes as sad and enormous. She wore a cloak with the hood thrown back, exposing the fine Valenciennes fichu drawn about her head. She put out a hand and Roger stooped over it gallantly, hat under elbow. He straightened, and Cousin Penny regarded him with her liquid black eyes.

"Oh, Roger, how *nice* to see you! It seems years since I've seen you, but of course it can't be, for you only went up to Oxford, didn't you? How handsome you've grown! Did you come with the gentlemen last night?"

"Yes," Roger said. It was simpler than explanations.

"And now you're out for a ride before breakfast. What it is to be a young man! I shall be seeing you at dinner, Roger, shan't I? There's so *much* you must tell me. Are you *very* wise with all your learning, Roger? And *where* did you learn to kiss a lady's fingers?"

All this in a light sweet voice that had the tinkle of a thin silver bell. That was how he always thought of Cousin Penny, somehow—as a small thin bell, quite empty except for the little clapper running on and on.

He said carefully, "Cousin Penny, I'm going away for a time. Probably a long time. I'm going to the colonies."

She gave a start, fingers at mouth in her poor silly way. "So far, Roger?"

"Every young man must seek his fortune now that the wars have come to an end."

"Must you seek your fortune, Roger? I have money."

"Not enough for me," he cried gaily. "I want the wealth of the Indies, no less. I shall come home and drive you about in a coach and six, with a little black boy to hold your fan in summer and carry your muff for you the rest of the year."

She said one of those shrewd things that came out of her confused mind at times, disconcerting because of their very unexpectedness. "Shall you bring home money enough to make Suddenholt what it was when you were young, Roger?"

He was a little startled that she should have seen his dream so nakedly. He said gravely, "I shan't come with less, I promise you."

"Are you sure you've told me everything?" Cousin Penny said plaintively.

"Everything, except that you've very beautiful this morning and I can't keep a lovely lady sitting in the cold."

A blush spread over her cheeks and her eyes sparkled. "You talk like your dear father—such a charming man! And you'll come back? Say you'll come back to Suddenholt again!"

"I swear!"—hat against heart. He caught her fingers again, kissed them and swung into the old wooden saddle with a cavalier's grace.

"Hup!" cried the coachman and snapped his whip over the steaming bays. Away they went, with Cousin Penny's handkerchief fluttering forlornly from the panel.

CHAPTER III

THE HIGHWAYMAN

ROGER rode across the heart of Kent, drinking it in like a beast of the desert before leaving an oasis. In Rochester at dusk he put up at a small inn by the waterside, and to pay for his night's lodging sold his faithful hanger (still nicked in the blade from the Culloden fight) to a naval lieutenant from the Chatham docks for ten shillings. He wondered why he had come this way, seeing that Rochester had no trade with the colonies. But of course, he had come by the instinct of a man of Kent—following Medway water to the sea. *Invicta!*

He discussed his prospects cautiously with the lieutenant over a pot of purl, and learned that instinct is a poor guide in such matters.

"The colonies!" cried the lieutenant, a hook-nosed man with a stiff knee got at Belle Isle with Admiral Hawke—or so he said. "London's the place to find your way to the colonies, lad, and Bristol's better. Waste no time here! India—that's the place. The natives let a sahib have for sixpence what they'd charge any other man a guinea for, aye, and wait on him hand and foot for nothing. It's got to be seen to be believed. In a few years ye'll have a fine house, full o' servants, a business that runs itself, money from nowhere, your pick o' pretty Hindu women to while away the time, and a boy to pop curried meat in your mouth to save ye the trouble of eating. Why, I know Calcutta pilots that live like nabobs, and they ain't even gentlemen!"

"That's a long way from home, the other side of the world," Roger said restlessly. "What about America? Have you been there?"

"America?" The lieutenant made a mouth. "All wild savages, outside a strip along the coast. Not like the Indians of India, mind, that's got jewels and mohurs and such stuff to come by in the way o' trade. A lot o' naked heathen with naught but a feather, a fur and a clay pot to bless 'emselves. I've only seen the ports, myself. *They're* full o' Yankee traders, a sharp lot—skin a louse for its pelt—bless the Lord through their noses—look upon a man from England as a foreigner. Find yourself swinging a hoe in the tobacco fields. Or piling stockfish in a Boston warehouse. Lucky to get it. No place for a gentleman. Take my advice—India or stay at home."

A day along the quays, talking to bargemen and seamen, was even more discouraging. The end of the wars had smitten their trade like a blight. Ships and men were idle in every port between the Needles and the Kyle of Tongue. Even the press gangs had vanished—a phenomenon. The navy was actually discharging men by the thousand. Add to these another multitude discharged by the army, and the crews of privateers out of a trade with the peace, and you had a pretty kettle of fish.

Roger's face grew longer as the tale unfolded. Rochester was overrun with men paid off at Chatham, money gone and begging now at every tavern door and about the cathedral steps. Roger gave away the proceeds of his precious hanger before he realized the folly of it. The inn-keeper was rather impressed with his manner but doubtful of his clothes, and demanded a daily payment of the reckoning. Roger searched his worn saddlebag for something else to sell. The little looking-glass was not worth sixpence. He could not part with his razor nor his spare shirt and stockings, and wild horses could not have dragged from him the great cairngorm brooch Prince Charles had given him when they parted in the Highlands.

The silver spurs, then. He hated the thought. It had been wrench enough to part with his faithful hanger—like parting with a good right hand; but the cheerful music of the spurs at his worn boot-heels had been a stay and comfort all these weary months. He pawned them for a guinea and was rich for a week, telling himself that he would redeem them at the first turn of his luck and knowing dismally that luck lay somewhere beyond the sea.

What troubled him most was his own uncertainty. His restless mind had always given him a quick decision in the past, to be followed for good or ill. Now he was lost. He had thrown away the lodestone of the Stuart cause which had led him into such strange and perilous scenes. Suddenholt was impossible. Oxford had given him a smattering of learning, no more. His impatient Sudden mind had hated the drudgery of study and leaped too eagerly at the university's devout faith in the Stuarts. He wanted passionately to get away. But where, where?

There was no answer—not in Rochester at any rate.

He took the London road on a bleak February morning with a purse as empty as his mind.

The way was deep in mud but the Romney nag stepped blithely after his long rest, snuffing the salty air as if he smelled in the offing the brandy luggers of home. Along the road they passed little knots of seamen tramping hopefully for London. Men were tramping to London from all the ports, from all the garrison towns, as if London were some kind of Mecca in this hardest of hard times.

A sea mist drifted across the Thames marshes, cold as charity. Parts of a flat and dreary landscape emerged and vanished in the uneasy white swathes. The few yards of highway before and behind were always the same and he had a whimsy that the horse had led him upon some sort of treadmill that revolved and got him nowhere.

Houses were few and far apart and had no life about them to the passing eye, looming as dark square shapes in the vapor to right or left and sliding behind without a word, without a footfall, without the sight of a face. A dog barked once, that was all. He had passed long since the last of the ragged pilgrims who had set out afoot from Rochester that morning, and when he came upon a gibbet, the illusion of a dead world was complete. The horse gave a great snort and shied at the thing.

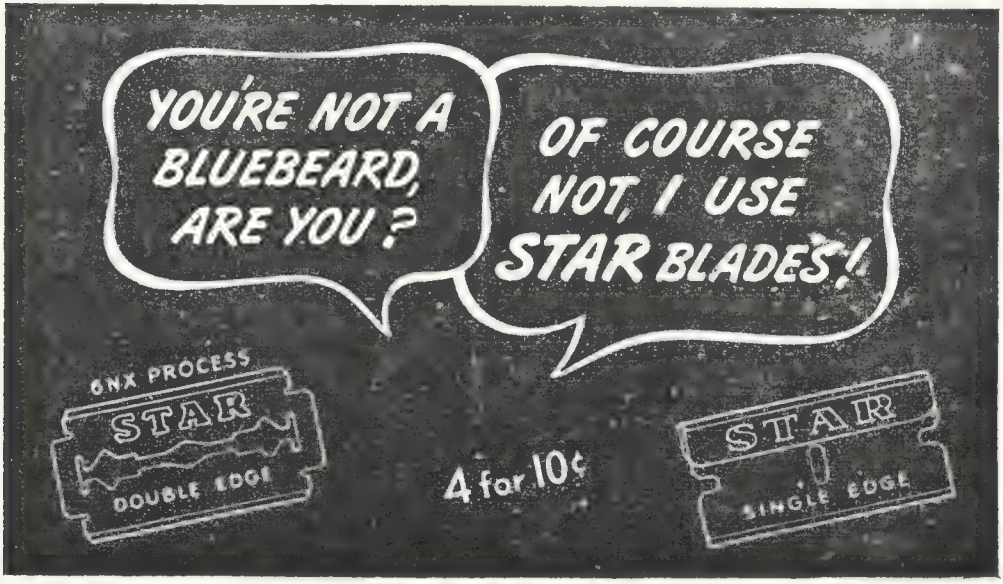
Roger brought him down with a savage jerk on the bit. "That's your bad conscience, my old smuggler. Steady now!"

He looked for a crossroad but there was none. The gibbet stood against the highroad in the midst of the waste. Its outstretched wooden arm dangled a corpse in chains. The dead man had hung there a long time—since autumn, probably. A paper setting forth his crime had been fastened to the post but had rotted and blown away, its outline marked with a pattern of rusty nailheads. The flesh of the corpse had rotted and gone, too, except for his face, which was tarred to preserve it for the purposes of the law; and that black mask had shrunk against the skull, eyeless, with lips gone thin and wrinkled like old glove leather, snarling away from a set of very good teeth. Rags of clothing hung loosely on the bones—a round blue jacket and a pair of wide, short-legged slops such as seamen wore. Someone had stolen his shoes. A bight of rusty chain drooped between the anklebones and another fastened his wrists before him, and the whole lamentable ruin hung from the gibbet by another rusty chain attached to an iron collar about the neck. The hanged man carried his head slightly to one side, which gave him a quizzical look, and the wet breeze from the Thames turned him slowly from side to side, so that he had a horrible air of watching for someone to come along and take him down.

Roger inspected these details with a cool eye. He had seen a good many dead men in the past three years. He speculated on the hanged man's crime, and as he meditated with the uneasy horse wincing under him, a harsh voice cried, "Money or your life!"

It seemed to come from the thing on the gibbet, but now Roger saw a grassy bank behind it, rising steeply from the roadside, and on the top of it, vague but menacing in the mist, the figure of a man very much alive.

The man came nearer rapidly. He wore a jacket and trousers of the sort that clothed the corpse, and a small blue hat, thrice cocked. He had a large red Barcelona handkerchief tied about the lower half of his face. This much Roger saw distinctly—and something else. All the menace in the man's voice and attitude



was concentrated in the object in his hand, a large horse-pistol pointed straight at Roger's stomach.

"You offer a beggarly choice," said Roger, sitting very still.

"I know no better," said the man, coming down the bank. His hair was gathered in a short pigtail stiffened with tar. A pair of yellow metal rings dangled at his ears.

"The trade-cry of a footpad," Roger said. "You look more like a sailor—and a damned unhandsome one at that."

"Handsome is as handsome does. Get down."

Roger got down. "I have no money," he said.

"That's what they all say."

"Would I be riding this bag of bones if I'd a guinea for coach fare?"

The fellow looked him up and down and ran a hard gray eye over the horse.

"Turn out your pockets—and no tricks, mind! Off wi' the cloak, fust!"

ROGER unfastened the great brass button at his throat and gave the cloak a twirl as if to throw it off. For a moment the flying cloth hung wide-spread in air between him and the highwayman, and in that moment he dived swiftly at the fellow's legs. Down they went together in the mud, Roger smiting a hard fist into the other's belly. The highwayman uttered a gasp of anguish and struck at Roger's head with the heavy pistol barrel. The blow fell on Roger's shoulder. He caught at the wrist thus exposed to him and wrenched shrewdly, drawing his knees under him and throwing himself forward.

They struggled together in silence while the horse looked on and the dead man on the gibbet kept his endless watch upon the road. Five minutes passed. They rolled over several times in the mud. In one of these convulsive movements, Roger found his chance, slipping his right arm under the other man's, forcing it back, turning himself away and working his hand and wrist under the fellow's chin. He tautened his arm sharply then, and the man uttered a terrible cry.

"Ahhhhh, God! Don't break my neck!"

"The hangman will do that. Have ye had enough?"

The fellow made a desperate effort to free himself, but now Roger had a firm grip with his legs as well. He set his muscles again, and again the fellow screamed.

"Give me the pistol," Roger said. He felt for it with his left hand.

The highwayman opened his fingers and let the weapon go.

Roger jumped to his feet. The man remained in the mud, groaning, feeling his jaw and twisting his head from side to side. The red kerchief had slipped from his face in the struggle and revealed a nose like a potato, a wide mouth grimacing with pain, a set of strong jaws badly in need of a razor.

"Where'd ye learn that trick?" he gasped, without looking up.

"In Lancashire."

"Ye talk like a Kentish man."

"I'm a Man of Kent," said Roger with the pointed pride of those born east of Medway. "Where did you learn the highway trade?"

"Here," said the fellow ruefully. "And little good it's done me! Four shillin' off a sluiceman from the marshes and a brass ticker that don't keep time." He went on feeling his jaw. "You're a cool 'un! That there pistol's loaded and well primed. I might ha' shot ye dead."

"Not this morning, my friend. A pistol held abroad in a drizzle like this would misfire every time. If you'd held it under your jacket, I'd have given you more respect. What's your name?"

"Tom Fuller."

"Seaman?"

"Yes." He added an oath for emphasis.

Roger nodded toward the gibbet. "So was that pretty piece of fruit up there, by the cut of his slops."

"Jemmie Calter, that was. I knowed him well. Shipmates with Jemmie, I was. As good a pair o' seamen as Old England ever fed poor vittles. The things we seen! Last Michaelmas we was paid off at Chatham. Cursed small pay it was, too. Jemmie drunk his up inside a fortnight. Then he was for Lunnon, straight off. But I had a sweetheart, Gillingham way, and stayed there buying her ribbons and such. All for naught, mind. Fortnight ago I was down to me last farden and she ups and offs with a half-pay lootenant as was old enough to be her father. So I lifted a pistol off o' the gentleman she kep' house for and took arter 'em. 'Tweren't no use. Diddled me, they did, somewhere atween Favershaw and Canterb'ry. So I offs for Lunnon and what do I see by the road there? Why, old Jemmie hisself, tucked up like a bloody mutineer for liftin' of a farmer's purse, and a bit o' paper nailed to the mast a-settin' out his crime. Knowed him by the shoes, I did—which same I'm wearin' now—and my old brass button on his sleeve that I give him for a keepsake in Jamaiky."

"Some thief who'd lifted Jemmie's clothes?" suggested Roger, for the sake of argument.

"Besides which," said Tom Fuller, sitting up, "there's Jemmie's teeth as clean as a hound's and his big toe a-missin' as he lost under a carronade in a blow off Giberaltar. That's him all right. And now"— with a dreary eye on the gibbet—"you're a-goin' to turn me in and do the same for me that's just a poor seaman down on his luck and never got a penny off ye. Waitin' for the tide-coach from Gravesend, I was."

"What for?"

The seaman shrugged. "Them that can afford the coach can afford a bit o' road tax."

They struggled together in silence while the dead man on the gibbet kept his endless watch upon the road.

Roger considered. "That's the most sensible thing you've said this morning. Get up out of the mud."

Tom Fuller got up slowly. "Goin' to turn me over to the coach guard, I s'pose?"

"Not so fast. A toll for the king's highway intrigues me, Tom Fuller. I've an empty purse myself."

"God's blood! I thought ye was a gentleman."

"I am a gentleman—short of cash. Now what's it to be—a share of the dibs or hang at next Rochester assizes?"

"I'm with ye," said the seaman promptly.

"Good! Now, about the guards . . ."

"Two outriders about two lengths astern, as a rule, and a feller on the box beside the coachman with a blunderbuss."

"I see. This calls for a horse and high stratagems. Follow me."

He rode on slowly to the next milestone, Tom Fuller trotting at his stirrup. The mist was thicker toward the Thames, and the smell of the marshes was overlaid with a gust of salt, of old fish, of the tide-borne filth of London.

"Wait here, off the road a bit," Roger said. "I'll bring the coach to a stand by the milestone. You're to run out and catch the horses' heads."

"Hark!" snapped the seaman.

FROM the fog towards Gravesend came the crack of a whip and the splash of hoofs and wheels. Roger galloped his nag two hundred yards along the road, turned off, and rode a little way into the mist. The coach was nearer than he had thought. It appeared almost at once—four big black horses dragging a fat yellow vehicle through the deep mud at four hard miles an hour. Two dim figures sat on the box, huddled in cloaks against the cold and wet. The coach was splattered with mire and the glass door-panel was obscured by the breath of the passengers. It lurched past and out of his view. An enormous wait, then the outriders came.

Roger rode into the highway behind them, wondering how soon they would hear the splash of hoofs at their backs. They seemed absorbed in their own discomfort, two shivering fellows in battered cocked hats and thin round jackets. One lagged a length or two behind the other, and Roger was up to him before he sensed new company. He turned sharply and found the pistol muzzle at his side.

"Get down," said Roger in a whisper, "and do it quietly or you'll never drink another pint of porter."

The fellow slipped out of the saddle without a word. Roger caught his bridle and trotted up to the other horseman. This one heard the double splash of hoofs and turned his head idly.

"What—" he began, and saw the pistol.

"Off with you!" Roger said. The man slid off into the mire, mouth agape.

Holding both captured reins in his left hand, Roger now kicked his steed into a shambling gallop. He drew abreast of the dripping hind wheels, then the spattered door and its gray-vapored glass. Just ahead to the left the milestone gleamed white in the fog.

He shouted, "Stand! Stand and deliver!" and pointed the pistol at the man with the blunderbuss. The man turned a pair of popping eyes and at once cast the gun into the road as if the thing were hot.

The coachman bellowed, "Stand be damned!" and raised his whip for a lash at the horses, but now Tom Fuller ran out of the mist and caught the reins of the front black on the nigh side, jerking its head back savagely. The horses reared at this apparition. The coach stopped with a jerk.

"Get down," Roger said. They scrambled to the road, the coachman swearing.

"Tom!"

"Sir?"

"Mount one of the outriders' horses and hold the other. You'll find pistols in the saddle holsters."

"What about these 'ere coach-horses?"

"They'll stand."

Tom swung himself up and drew a pistol. Roger abandoned the New Romney nag for the other outrider's horse. He rode up to the coach door, which was opening to emit a strong voice that demanded, "Coachman! What the devil d'ye mean by—" The voice ceased abruptly.

Its owner was a man in his forties with large light eyes very wide apart, a pointed nose, and a short mouth with little irascible folds at the corners. A thick traveling cloak was draped about his broad shoulders, but Roger could see a rich red velvet frockcoat embroidered with gold lace, a glimpse of blue satin waistcoat, a ruffled shirt with a good deal of fine Flemish lace at the throat, and a pair of black velvet breeches. There ought to be a fat purse in such breeches.

On the seat beside him sprawled a most ungainly young man of twenty-one or two. Everything about him was long and meager—his body, his legs, his nose which turned up sharply at the end, his neck, his face which was like a reflection in a too-cheap mirror. His upper lip sloped away to the mouth, and his lower lip sloped in to the throat with little or no chin between. He was wigged and curled like the other, and like him wore a gold-laced hat with high military cocks, but his heavy cloak was muffled about him, leaving nothing to the eye but the lean silk-stockinged shanks. There was no one else in the coach. Evidently the martial pair had engaged the whole accommodation to be sure of their own company.

They looked at the pistol and then at Roger's face, trying to outstare him. The older man's expression was a quaint mixture of anger and amusement, but it was resigned, it accepted the situation. Not so the young man's. His large eyes were balls of blue fire under the knitted carroty eyebrows.

Said Roger quickly, "Keep your hands away from your sword-hilt, if you please, Major Wolfe—it is Major Wolfe, isn't it?"

The blue eyes blazed higher. "Who the devil are you?"

"Never mind, sir. Your hand—don't tempt me, I beg, for I could kill you with a great deal of pleasure, I assure."

"Why?" barked the older man.

"And you, too, Colonel—it's Colonel Belcher of the Twentieth, isn't it? I have the advantage of you both, I see."

"You talk like a gentleman," said the young officer stiffly. "Are you gentleman enough to own your name?"

"I'm not fool enough, Major. Besides, it wouldn't mean anything to you. You've never seen me before, except at a distance, amongst a great many others, and in much tumult and bad weather. You see, I was at Culloden—on the Stuart side of the field."

"Ah!" said Colonel Belcher, nodding.

"He's trying to frighten us," snapped young Major Wolfe. "Tell me, Sir Highwayman, what you saw of me at Culloden."

"Not much, I admit," Roger answered promptly, resting the heavy pistol barrel across his left forearm and watching them warily. "You were on old Hangman Hawley's staff, safely removed from the broadswords. I remember you best before the battle, about Aberdeen, robbing the Highland gentlefolk in the name of King George."

"Name one instance!"

"Mrs. Gordon, for one instance. Why, you even stole a picture of her son, because old Hawley wanted the frame. Everyone in the Highlands knows that."

"Pish!" said the young man irritably. "Why should I defend myself to a thief?"

"The pot calls the kettle black. As for you, Colonel Belcher, I remember how your regiment slaughtered the wounded on the battlefield and the fugitives along the road. Their hands were as red as their jackets when they got to Inverness. That butcher Cumberland must have been proud of you and them. Do you sleep well o' nights, even now? But don't answer—it's your money I want, and the devil with your conscience. Your purses, please!"

"You'll be happy to know," Belcher said, drawing out a heavy silk purse and flinging it out into the mud, "that I'm giving up command of the Twentieth to Major Wolfe here—and it's still stationed in the Highlands, where you come from, I suspect."

"Your purse!" demanded Roger of the major.

"Shoot away!" said the young man, defiantly.

"Tut! He would," Belcher said. "Don't be such a rash young fool, Wolfe. One of the first things a soldier has to learn is to recognize superior force and yield the field."

"There," cried Roger, "speaks a man who has seen Fontenoy and Prestonpans!"

Belcher twisted his lips as if those memories were sour indeed. "You seem to know a great deal about me, Jacobite. I wish I knew half as much about you."

"I don't doubt that," Roger said, deftly catching with his left hand the purse which the young major tossed toward the open door. "I may be able to tell you some day when King James comes into his own. Tom, my boy, cut the traces of the coach-horses and give 'em a lick down the road. You"—motioning with the pistol to the crestfallen guard—"pick that purse out of the mud and hand it up to me. I hope your fare has better manners when he comes to pay his coach hire."

"Hup!" cried Tom Fuller to the horses, and away they went toward Rochester. The coachman and guard watched them disappear into the mist with doleful eyes. A little way behind the coach stood the discomfited outriders, mud to the calves. The New Romney horse had wandered off into the mist, cropping the poor winter grass.

Roger swept off his hat gracefully to the officers and rode away toward London whistling, *Hey, Johnnie Cope, are ye waukin' yet?* for their pleasure, while Tom Fuller rode at his side.

As the derelict coach and its forlorn group faded into the vapor behind, Tom slipped the handkerchief off his face and exclaimed, "Ecod, sir, you're a game 'un!"

"How so?"

"Standin' up the tide-coach—three armed men, more for aught ye knew—with that there pistol o' mine as got its primin' soaked in the fog this mornin'!"

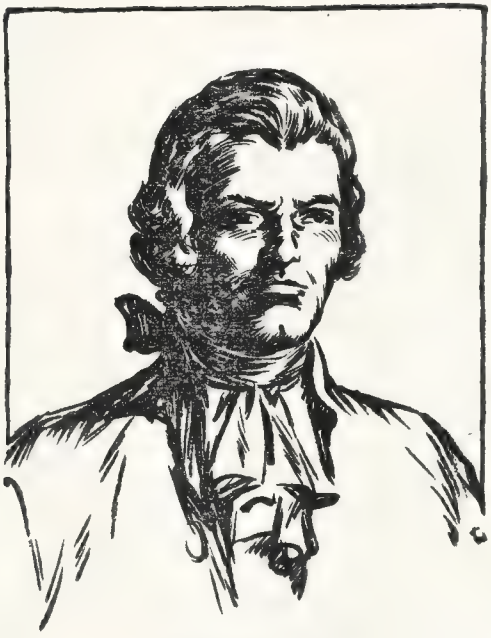
Idly, Roger pointed the pistol at the road ahead and pulled the trigger. The flint snapped down in a torrent of sparks, the priming flared, the long muzzle jumped and spat a stream of fire between the horse's ears. The report was like a thunderclap. The horse reared and plunged indignantly and Tom Fuller said, "Well, I'm damned!"

"So am I," said Roger Sudden thoughtfully.

CHAPTER IV

TOOLEY STREET

FOR caution's sake they left the London road, with its hazards at both ends—the horses were sure to be recognized at the Gravesend post inn, and there would be a lively hunt from Rochester when the stranded coach was found—and struck westward across the fields. Tom Fuller steered by the sun, a pale white coin in the fog. With this guide and no small amount of luck, and by a maze of paths and lanes which they used as it suited their purpose, they turned towards London at last by the Epsom road. It was nightfall then, with the horses badly blown and Tom complaining that all the skin was "off his transom,"



ROGER SUDDEN

so they abandoned the foundered beasts in a field and walked stiffly into the village ahead for a bite and a sup at the inn. Tom was for sleeping there, but Roger said no. "The horses will be found in the morning and those post-riders' saddles are a dead give-away. We must leave 'em far behind tonight, my friend. In London we can disappear and none will be the wiser."

They pushed on afoot and saw the first lights of the city from the crest of Streatham Hill. They were weaponless, for Roger had flung away Tom Fuller's empty pistol as they left the Rochester road, and the post-riders' heavy weapons were too awkward to carry concealed and too easily identified to be worn in the open.

There would be a fine hue and cry. The young major of foot would not count for much, but the Honorable Edward Belcher was another matter. Life would be very difficult for wandering sailors on the Rochester road in the next few weeks.

Walking was not easy in the mud and darkness, especially for Roger in his jackboots. A light breeze blew down the Thames and the air was crisp and clear, with the cold fire of stars overhead. It was very late when at last they trudged through the empty waste of Saint George's Fields into Southwark. Most of the houses were dark, and they had a mean look in the starlight. Roger halted.

"I don't know London very well, Tom, but I've a feeling we should go over the Thames by boat. There's only London Bridge to cross afoot, and the watch there will give a sharp eye to such vagabonds as you and me."

"Ye won't get a wherryman this time o' night," Tom said.

"Then we must find lodgings this side the river. Do you know these parts?"

"Well enough. South'ark's a thieves' rookery, sir—Dirty Lane, Foul Lane, Blackman Road. Stony Street, Dead Man's Place, Bandy-leg Walk, Love Lane, Maid Lane—and that's a joke, I tell ye, for there ain't a virgin in the borough! Them buildin's yonder in the edge o' the fields is the Surrey Bridewell and the King's Bench Prison. Over there to starboard is hospitals—Guy's and Saint Thomas—and another jail. No place for a gentleman like you."

"On the contrary," quoth Roger, "it's the very place for gentlemen of the road like both of us. Lead on, my Tom. None of your Love Lanes and Thieves' Walks, either. There's a thoroughfare down the right bank of the Thames. I see a church; there must be Christians in those parts."

"That's Saint Olaves, in Tooley Street."

"And could we get a wherry, think you, nigh Tooley Street in the morning?"

"There's Tooley Stairs, right below London Bridge, sir."

"Ah! Now I seem to recall a rhyme concerning nine poor tailors of Tooley Street who called 'emselves 'We, the people of England.' A tailor who squats on his bench all day must have a place to stretch at night. Lead on! A lodging in Tooley Street!"

Tom knocked at three doors before he got an answer. A nightcapped head was thrust from a window overhead, a sharp male voice demanded their business, and a hoarse female voice within suggested loudly that it could be no good at this hour of the night.

"Lodgin' for the night," said Tom promptly. "We're two cold sober sailormen that has good money to pay."

The window closed, footsteps came, and the street door opened on a stout though rusty chain. The face that regarded them by the light of a farthing dip was incredibly evil, an old, thin man, hook-nosed and snag-toothed, with a straggle of dirty white hair under a red flannel nightcap.

"See their money fust!" urged the female voice. "A shillin', mind!"

Roger thrust one of Major Wolfe's florins into the light. The door opened magically. They stepped inside and found themselves in the presence of a huge woman whose vast red face was so hairy as to be well-nigh bearded. She was wrapped in a large shawl over a greasy nightgown and she held in one mighty fist a cudgel of stout blackthorn.

"You're no sailor!" she said to Roger at once.

"This florin says I am," he returned. She

took it, bit it, closed an eye, pursed her hairy lips and grunted. "It's the garret, mind! Sal's bed, but she ain't 'ome tonight. Ye'll 'ave to be out before breakfast, though. Sal's pertickerler, 'specially when she's 'ad a good night of it."

"This way," the old man said. They followed his lean shanks up three flights of rickety stairs and stepped into a low chamber containing a flock-bed, a broken chair, a looking-glass, a box draped with a piece of muslin and apparently used for a dressing table, and some oddments of female clothing hung on nails along the wall.

The old man put the dip on the box, announced in an oily voice, "Stay longer, if ye like. Sixpence a day each, mind, and sixpence, say, for Sal. Sal's obligin'. Seafarin' men like Sal, they do." His thin giggle trailed away down the stairwell in the dark.

TOM looked at the bed. "Poor 'commodations for a gentleman like you, sir—a strump's pallet in a South'ark slum."

"I'll sleep on the floor," said Roger. "And so will you if you're wise."

Tom prowled about the garret with the light. "Everything's clean, sir. No bugs, that's a comfort. This 'ere corner's still wet where the floor was swabbed s'mornin'. Why, I've see worse quarters in a public inn! I'll take the bed if ye don't want it."

"First," Roger said briskly, drawing the purses from his pockets, "we'll divide the spoils." He emptied the coins upon Sal's dressing-box and counted them off in two exact portions. The purse of Major Wolfe contained six guineas and some silver. Colonel Belcher was the richer man by far—by eighteen guineas, to be exact.

"Look, 'ere, sir," Tom said, wild-eyed "you're a-splittin' 'em even!"

"D'ye want more?" Roger said.

" 'Struth, sir, ye know what I mean! You did it all—bold piece o' work as ever I see, and I've see some bold lads in me time—"

"I say half."

Tom said urgently, "Beggin' your pardon, sir. You're a gentleman and I'm jest a poor seaman on the beach, but d'ye think, sir . . . I mean to say, would ye mind if—if we was to sail in company? I'd be your servant, like. I wouldn't be in your way, sir. I could do things for ye, sir. I'd do anything for a man like you. There ain't many like you in England nowadays."

"There'll be one less in a week or two," Roger answered brusquely. "For I'm off to the colonies the first chance I get. And gentleman be damned! I'm out for my fortune, any way I can get it, anywhere! I'm putting home behind me—and all that goes with it. You, you're just home from years abroad in the king's ships. Take the money and find yourself a good healthy girl, that's my advice, and buy yourself a dramseller's license Bristol way, where the seamen come."

"Girls and drams! I want to go along o' you, sir, that's what I want. Look 'ere, sir, ye can't afford to go without me. Fortin! I can show you where fortin is. In the West Indies—in the seas about Jamaica, for choice. I know a crick in the Cuba coast, with good huntin' in the Windward Passage, a couple o' gunshot away, and I know where ye could get a good fast sloop and pick up some stout lads—"

"It smells like piracy. What—a sea highwayman?"

"Why not, sir? There's more'n one gentleman like you made a fortin at it and settled down respectable in Jamaica with a Creole wife and a carriage and four and a summer house in the mountains. Long as ye leave the English ships alone, the admiral on the Kingston station won't trouble his head about ye. There's good pickin' amongst the French and Spanish as ever was, and there's the fat Dutch traders out o' Curry-sow."

"How did you learn all this?"

Tom grinned. "I jumped the *Burton* frigate off o' Tiberoon along o' three other lads, in the summer o' '45, and took over the mountains to the French plantations about Gonaives. Afore long we fell in wi' some buccaneers—English, French, natives, all kinds—as was workin' the Windward Passage trade. God rot me, there was a time! Jem Calter was with me—him that's on the gibbet now by the Rochester road. Lived like blessed emperors, we did, every man Jack with a mulatto woman in a hut ashore and all the tafia he could drink. Piracy? Ye could call it that. None o' them high old games ye hear tales about in Kingston, mind. Just canoes and row-galleys, huntin' close under the land."

"And the emperors came home with scarce a penny to their names!"

A sheepish grimace. "Got a hankerin' for English women and a sup o' Kentish ale. Worked our way to Kingston, me and Jemmie, and signed aboard the old *Stratford* as was flyin' the homebound pennant in the roads."

"And that's your notion of a fortune in the colonies?"

"Ah, sir, we was just young fools and drunkards that had no eddication—not a scratch o' pen amongst the lot o' us. But a gentleman like you—why, sir, I could point many a gentleman in Kingston or Spanishtown that got his fortin quick and easy in the 'Red Sea trade,' as some calls it, and nobody thinkin' a mite the worse. And there's them as lives quiet on their money for a time till things blows over, like, and then comes home to old England, takes a fine house in the country, marries a lady, takes up fox-huntin' for to shake the rum lees out o' their liver, and goes to church a-Sundays in a coach, the same as a lord."

"Umph!" grunted Roger. "Fortune's where you find it, and where I find mine depends on any sort of passage to any sort of colony."

With a sudden gesture, Tom swept the little piles of coins together. "This 'ere money's your'n, sir. You keep it. Let me have a shillin' from time to time and I'm your man. I've got a feelin' about ye, sir. You're a-goin' to make your fortin right enough, and ye'll need that there to give ye a start, like."

"All right," Roger said abruptly. "I'd prefer to go alone, mind. I've ploughed my own furrow the past three years and found it to my liking."

"I'm jest your shadder, see?" the seaman said. "You go along the same as ye always did, and I'll foller ye to hell itself."

"I've a better destination," murmured Roger piously, "I hope."

THE house slept late, for it was Sunday morning, a fact of which the wayfarers were not aware until the bells of Saint Olaves broke the peace of Tooley Street with a thunderous clang. The house woke with a scurry that had nothing to do with morning devotions, however, for at that moment the old man's voice was heard crying up the stairwell, "Here's our Sal come home in a chair!" There was a great patter of feet in that warren of poor rooms and the sound of windows flung open, and voices.

Roger lay wrapped in the big ridingcloak with his boots for pillow, a bed he had slept in more times than he cared to count. He jumped up and was amused to see Tom Fuller crawling sheepishly out of the flock-bed. The single window, three of whose small panes were broken and stuffed with rags, presented some difficulty, but it opened after an effort and they peered down in time to see a young woman emerge from a sedan chair, pay the chairmen with a flourish and stand for a moment, hands on hips, receiving a shower of ribald congratulations from what seemed all of Tooley Street. Then she came indoors, and all the windows closed together against the chill of the February morning. In the house below, doors flew open and voices shouted greetings down the stairwell. Roger and Tom stepped out upon the landing, not wishing to be found in the lady's chamber, and nonplussed to find their retreat cut off by the lady herself. She came up the stairs greeting the inmates cheerfully at each landing, with the old man at her heels babbling in his oily voice that he "allus knowed she would get orf well," and making unintelligible signs to Roger and Tom from behind her back.

Sally wore a dress of flowered stuff with the skirt looped up in front to show a quilted petticoat finely sprinkled with embroidery. Her shoes were old and broken, but that did not seem to matter in view of her well-turned ankles, which were clad in white silk. But it was her face that took the eye—a fresh skin, a slender nose, a wide red mouth, a pair of lively blue eyes, all framed in the lace frills of her cap. She saw Tom Fuller as she neared the stair top and cried at once, "A bloody tarpaulin!" She turned to demand of Old Evil what a' devil he meant by letting her garret to a pair o' tarry sailors as soon as her back was turned.

"Let me explain," suggested Roger, pleasantly.

She gave him a hot blue stare. His boots were crusted with the dried mud of yesterday's roads, as were his plain blue breeches; his shirt was soiled, his waistcoat flung on askew, there was a wide tear in the front skirt of his coat, and all looked slept-in. His hair was unpowdered and still tied with Simonetta's garter ribbon, and his dark jaws needed a razor. As her eyes met his own steady black gaze, he saw a change in them, the blue softening like a spring sky after rain; and then a too-familiar succession—curiosity, unease, and finally the strange, leaping eagerness that had in it a quality forlorn and surrendered and lost. Other women in other places had told him that the mere look of him turned the blood in their veins to wine—or possessed them of devils.

All this flickered through his mind while the girl Sally inspected him, and he was filled with self-contempt that this weird gift should put him, even for a moment, on speaking terms with a common trollop.

"Who are you?" she cried.

"My name's my own," he replied curtly. "My friend and I were hard put for lodgings last night, and your landlord suggested that we sleep in your garret and pay you in the morning. I assure you it is none the worse."

"I didn't mean to be so sharp," she said meekly. "Did you pay Old Trope? You did?" She turned on Old Evil in a fury. He was sidling down the stairs at a great rate, seeing the turn of events. "Give the gentleman back his money, you hear?"

"Never mind," Roger said.

"You can have the garret anyhow," quoth Sally. "I've only come to get my bits o' things. Had a stroke o' luck, I have"—with a challenging smile. And in a sudden scream for Old Trope's benefit, "Got a nice chamber in Charing Cross, I have, and no more draggin' my legs up three pair o' stairs to a five-shillin' garret in South'ark!"

She stepped into her chamber under the slates leaving the door open, looking at Roger over her shoulder as she untied the lappets of her cap, and humming *Why Should We Quarrel For Riches,* in an inviting voice.

Tom Fuller turned and spat down the stairwell. Roger caught her sidelong eye and shook his head coldly. She tossed her brown head and set about gathering her "bits o' things." It

did not take her long. She came out with a flounce and a sniff and went running down the stairs singing, "Me name is Sally Madigan, kiss-me-quick and come ag'in," in a little scornful chant.

"Let's get out o' here," Tom Fuller growled.

"Where away?"

"A wherry to Wappin' Stairs and take a lodgin' thereabouts, where the ships come."

Roger thrust his hands in his breeches pockets and sauntered into the garret. By daylight it looked clean, as it had by candlelight. "I think we'll stay here a bit. It's cheap and we're well hidden. Wapping—they'll be turning Wapping and Gravesend upside down. Those men in the coach must have spotted you for a seaman, and remember, we rode off towards the Thames."

THEY bought an extra pallet and cheap bedding, and so began a strange existence amongst the denizens of Tooley Street, whose narrow houses tottered together as if for mutual warmth and support and looked as if one stiff breath of wind along the Thames would blow them all together like a heap of cards.

The lodging house of Isaac Trope leaned in the perpetual twilight of the shadow of Saint Olaves, whose tall square tower supported a small and ridiculous pinnacle on the side facing the lane, a gray hand pointing a withered and foreshortened finger to heaven. When the sun was in the west, the great stone gate of London Bridge cast a long shadow across the housetops to the edge of Tooley Stairs Lane.

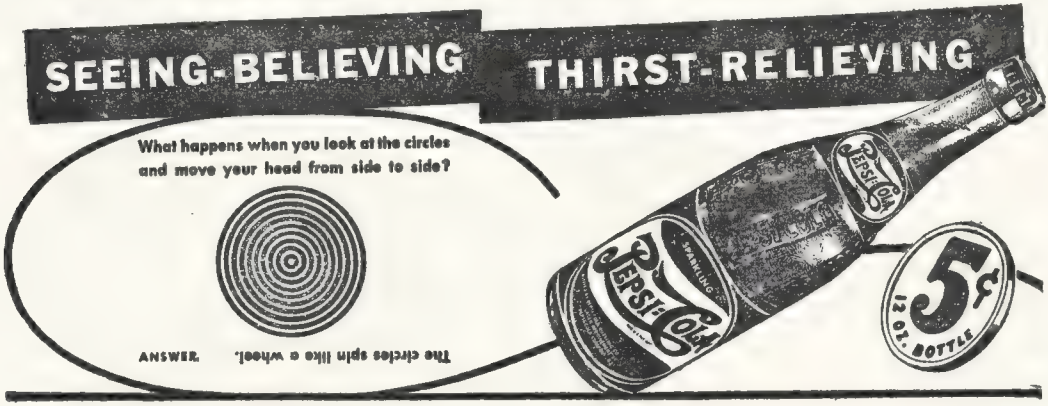
It was a turbid little backwater on the edge of the great traffic which poured from Kent and Surrey along the Borough Highway to the bridge and the marts and courts and counting-houses of the city. The Borough Highway formed a dividing line through Southwark, and Roger was amused to find that Tooley Street looked down with a sense of superior worth and even virtue on the people of the other side. There, in spite of the noble bulk and tall tower of Saint Mary Overy, lived the inferior tribes of Foul Lane, Stony Street, Dead Man's Place and other queer places—the resort, said Tooley Street, of thieves and rogues and murderers. Tooley Street prided itself on working for its living.

Within its three narrow floors the Trope house contained four-and-twenty men, women and children. The housekeeper was the hairy woman Lumley, who passed for Trope's widowed daughter and was whispered to be no such thing. With them on the ground floor lived Bob, the hackney-coachman, and his wife and two children, also Ned and Jack, a pair of chairmen, and a furtive person named Little Bob (to distinguish him from the hackney-coachman) who spent his days and half his nights across the bridge in the city and was said to be a pickpocket. On the second floor were Maggs, a chimney-sweep, with his wife and four youngsters, a journeyman barber named Vace with a wife and three, a waterman named Killick who kept a boat at Tooley Street stairs, and his wife, an oyster-woman.

Each morning Killick ferried his wife across the river to Billingsgate, where she loaded her tray with Whitsable oysters and cried them through the streets. When her stout woolen ankles had vanished up the greasy steps of Billingsgate wharf, Killick dropped down the river to set Tom Fuller and Roger in Wapping for the day.

Roger's first purchases provided him with a check shirt, a frieze jacket, a pair of wide-legged seamen's slops cut off just below the knee, and a pair of coarse stockings and shoes. These, topped with a blue hat whose brim was fastened close against the low crown in three tight little cocks like an apple tart—a style much favored by man-o'-war's-men—enabled him to stroll the narrow streets and lanes of Wapping without exciting comment, although as Tom Fuller said, he "talked too much like a gent to be proper mistook."

Tom did most of the talking and all of the tobacco-chewing and spitting which marked



the seamen of Wapping quite as much as their trousers and hats; and he knew not only the taverns and ordinaries of the tarry community between Ratcliffe Highway and the Thames but also the snug back-room dramshops and upstairs drinking dens, where all the talk was of ships and foreign parts. Here they heard queer things of the world, seen through the eyes of Jack Tar—tales of shipwreck and pestilence, of barratry, piracy, slavery and knavery of astonishing kinds, the seamy side of the traffic of the sea. None of this was very strange to Tom Fuller, who spun some notable yarns himself, but Roger drank it in.

These seamen out of London River seemed a race apart, a tribe of wondering Gentiles cursed with a knowledge of the sea, and any Wapping dramshop was the crossroads of the world. The earth was a great golden woman, many-breasted like one of those heathen Hindu goddesses, and about her all these brutal and thirsty children swarmed to suck, to explore, and to suck again. Yet all their sucking and exploring brought them little nourishment, for along their hard road waited a many-handed god to wring them dry—merchants, shipowners, tidewaiters, crimps and whores. The moral seemed to be that it was better to wring than to suck, and Roger made good note of it. Nevertheless, he was fascinated by the notion of the golden woman beyond the seas.

The difficulty was to get there. Somehow, because the wars had ended, the trade wind had ceased to blow about the world. Ships and men were idle all along the river. The shrewd gentlemen of the countinghouses had fastened their moneybags and were waiting for something to happen. Some declared that the peace could not last long, a patched-up thing, a giving-back of conquests that left neither king with value to show for the money spent. Others whispered that penny-pinching George cared nothing for colonies or foreign trade, was interested only in his mistresses and his beloved Hanover, like the first George, his father.

Wapping growled. All London growled. And the Lord Mayor was disturbed, for the city was full of discharged soldiers and seamen, tradesmen out of work, a growing army of beggars and vagabonds.

CHAPTER V

"ALL PERSONS DESIROUS TO ENGAGE—"

AS AN occasional change from Tooley Street and Wapping, Roger sought out a tavern off the Strand where a Jacobite group met once a week to toast the king over the water. Their dinners were held in a chamber at the rear where none but the chosen few were admitted, but the taproom was a sort of meeting place for Jacobites in that part of the city, and they smoked and talked with surprising freedom over their wine. The tavern-keeper was a Scot, like so many of the men who came there. London was full of Scots, most of them merchants in diligent pursuit of bawbees. There was even a Scotch Walk on 'Change. It was amusing to think they had invaded England successfully after all.

For these visits Roger wore what Tom Fuller called his "gentleman's rig." The French cut of the coat was a passport in itself, and the note of shabby gentility in his whole appearance bore out his story more faithfully than documents.

It was at once a relief and a pleasure to be able to talk of '45 to men who understood. France and Italy had been full of men with tales of battle—important battles and tremendous tales. When you mentioned the Highlands a glaze of indifference came into their eyes. They had never heard of Scotland, and the queer ramifications of English politics—Whigs, Tories, Jacobites, and two complete sets of royalty—made all you said incomprehensible. You learned to shut your mouth and save your breath. What were Falkirk and Culloden to such famous names as Belgrade, Fontenoy, Detingen? Could you mention Lord George Murray in the same breath with Marshal Saxe? You could not mention him at all.

Yet here, from the very men who heard his tales so eagerly, he learned again the truth that Charles had told him so cynically at Suddenholt. Jacobitism as a force in Britain was dead. Only the sentiment survived.

It was gall to think that for three years he had been merely a poor fool plotting. Roger returned to the Trope house a little sour about the mouth. He climbed the stairs glumly and on the second landing found a cluster of his fellow lodgers and, in their midst, Killick, the waterman, waving a soiled newspaper.

"Here!" cried Killick. "Here's a gentleman as can read as good's a parson—maybe better Mr. Sudden, sir!"

"What is it, Killick?"

"This 'ere paper, sir. You read it to 'em. I tried to tell 'em and they won't believe me!"

Maggs, the sweep, declared tipsily, "I says it's gammon, paper or no paper, eddication or no eddication." A strong reek of raw gin hung over the landing, not all of it from Maggs.

"'Ear! 'Ear!" cried the chairman, Jack.

"If Trope hadn't broke his spettacles he could read as well as any gentleman," announced the great creature Lumley, with a defiant look at Roger.

"Ow, give the feller a charnce," pleaded Vace, the journeyman barber.

"Is it true, Mr. Sudden, sir?" thrust in Trope. "All that about a free passage, I mean, and free vittles for a year?"

"Some other time," said Roger curtly and set a foot on the stair.

But several hands caught at him, and the hackney coachman said earnestly, "It means a lot to the like of us, sir, if it's true. A chance to get my woman and the young 'uns away from this starvin' town. A chance to make my fortin, maybe."

"Fetch a glim, someone," demanded Mrs. Maggs. "It's too dark 'ere for the gentleman to see which end o' the paper's which."

This was a hint for the barber's wife. No one else on that landing could afford such a luxury. Mrs. Vace gave a sniff, but she went into her chamber with her lean long-legged stride and came forth with a tallow dip.

"Now!" cried Maggs, snatching it from her and spattering himself with hot grease. "Now let's 'ave it, sir."

Resignedly Roger held the paper to the light—a London *Gazette*, old and soiled. The object of their interest, an advertisement, was framed in grimy thumbprints. He began to read aloud.

"Whitehall, March 7th, 1749

"A proposal having been presented to His Majesty for establishing a civil government in the province of Nova Scotia, in North America, as also for the better peopling and settling the said Province, and extending and improving the fishery thereof, by granting lands within the same, and giving other encouragement to officers and men lately dismissed His Majesty's land and sea service, and artificers necessary to building or husbandry—"

He broke off and looked up. "This doesn't apply to any of you!"

"Oh, yes, it do!" insisted Killick. "It's all over town—they'll take anybody, 'specially if he's got a wife and fambly. Read on, sir!"

"Settlers will be granted passage, and subsistence during their passage, as also for twelve months after their arrival . . . arms and ammunition for their defence . . . proper utensils for husbandry, fishery, erecting habitations and other necessary purposes . . . civil government to be established, with all the privileges of His Majesty's other colonies in America, and proper measures taken for their security and protection . . . lands . . ."

"Ah!" they cried together.

" . . . lands granted shall be in fee simple, free from quit rent or taxes for ten years, not more than one shilling per annum per fifty acres after that. Fifty acres to every private soldier or seaman, and ten acres over and above to every person (including women and children) of which his family shall consist, eighty acres to every officer under the rank of ensign in the land service and that of lieutenant in the sea service . . . two hundred acres to an ensign . . . three hundred to a lieutenant . . . four hundred to a captain—(The colony will be owned outright by half-pay colonels at this rate, my friends!)—reputed surgeons whether they have been in His Majesty's service or not. . . ."

"Never mind all that," protested Killick. "How do we go about gettin' our names on the list?"

"Are you sure you want to go?" Roger asked. "I mean, you don't even know what the country's like. And it's a long way from Tooley Street if you can't abide it when you get there."

"We'll charnce that," Vace said confidently.

"But husbandry! You're never seen a farm!"

The barber winked and smiled. "Right you are, sir! Could ye see me pushin' a plough? I aim to sell my blessed acres arter I get there and set up in me old trade. There'll be gentlemen in the colony and chins to scrape and wigs to comb."

"And chimbleys to sweep," said Maggs.

"And oysters? Be there oysters in that country?" demanded Mrs. Killick, with professional interest.

"There's everything," the hackney coachman said.

"Read on, sir," Killick urged. "Can we get our names on the list now? It ain't too late? That there paper's old, sir, ain't it?"

Roger hitched the *Gazette* a little nearer to the candle.

"All persons desirous to engage are to enter their names on or before the 7th of April, 1749, at the Trade and Plantations Office, or with the Commissioner of the Navy residing at Portsmouth and Plymouth. Transports shall be ready to receive such persons on board on the 10th April and be ready to sail on the 20th.

"And now, friends, if you'll allow me. . . ." He passed the sheet to Killick and started up the stairs.

"This 'ere Novy Scosher," Killick called after him. "Where is it?"

"North America, it says. That's half across the world by sea, I think, and a choice of climate from the tropics to the pole. More I couldn't tell you."

HE ENTERED the garret blithely and found Tom Fuller sitting in the dusk on the bed that had been Sally Madigan's with his head in his hands.

"What's the matter?" Roger demanded at once.

"Matter enough," Tom growled.

"Well?" Roger sat on his own pallet and faced the man.

"I'm done for, sir. I'm as good as took and

tried and tucked up on a gibbet. In a fortnight's time they'll have my carcass by the Rochester road along o' Jemmie Calter's. But it's you I'm worrit for, sir."

"What's happened? It can't be as bad as all that."

"'Slike this, sir. I'm down in Wappin', see? Speakin' strict, I'm down by Shadwell Dock, mindin' me own business and sober as a Methody parson. There's a young woman—"

"Ah!"

"—that keeps bar in the Sun Tavern and is partial to sailormen, 'specially me. So she's got the arternoon off and we're walkin' up the Ratcliff Highway for to sit a while in the fields at the end o' Canon Street, when up comes a cove as she knowed in Kent, where she comes from. 'Hillo, Polly!' says the cove, and 'Hillo, Jack!' says me lady, and they fall to jabberin' about the folk in Dartford nineteen to the dozen. As for me, I'm flabbergasted, for this cove is one o' them outriders behind the tide-coach that day. And he keeps dartin' a queer look at me. 'Course, he never seed much o' me face, wi' the hankitcher slung across me mug that day, but he keeps lookin' and lookin', and I starts edgin' away, till Polly sings out, 'Come back, Tom, ye jealous critter! This is on'y an old friend from Dartford.' And, 'Jack,' she says, 'this is me friend Tom from South'ark.'

"'South'ark!' says the cove. 'Whereabout in South'ark, now?' By that time I see what he's a-squintin' at—this starboard claw o' mine that I got a bullet through at Cartagena. There ain't no two hands like that in England. 'What part o' South'ark?' says the cove. 'The hind part—to you!' says I, and I'm off, makin' all sail down Old Gravel Lane for the river, wi' the sharp cove close astern, bawlin' 'Stop, thief!' at the top o' his pipe. Afore long it strikes me I'm makin' straight for Execution Dock, which is the last place I want to see, so I make a sharp tack into one o' them alleys that twist atween Old Gravel and New Gravel. There I lose him. But he knows whereabouts I make my landfall, and I hear him bawl there's fifty guineas reward for me. That means they've got a hundred up for you, sir."

"How much have you told this Polly woman?" demanded Roger.

"No more'n a man tells a woman as he wants a kiss and a squeeze off."

"That might be a lot, if I know women."

THE sailor shook his head sullenly. "All she knows is, I'm Tom from South'ark, a seaman out of a berth as promised her a shillin' for ribbons." Roger nursed his knee and whistled the air of *The Black Joke*.

"By this time they're watchin' all the roads out o' town," Tom went on gloomily. "Caught, sir, caught like a rat in a cask!"

"Southwark's a big cask, Tom."

"There ain't a soul in it wouldn't cut me throat for a guinea, let alone fifty."

"Nobody knows you by sight except a few people in Tooley Street."

Tom Fuller held up the scarred hand. "Here's what they'll be lookin' for, sir. I can't cut off me blessed claw. They'll have that all over Lunnon by mornin'—broadsheets on the tavern doors and a crier ringin' his bell and howlin' it out on every corner in the borough. Somebody's sure to blow the gaff. You get away, sir, while there's time."

Roger shook his head. "We'll both stay where we are."

"Humph! We can't stay here another week, sir! Trope's fell to loo'ard with his rent and the landlord was here yesterday, a fat man in a chaise. Said it was pay up or get out. Dressed like a lord, he was, and kep' dabbin' at his nose with a scented hankitcher to drown the smell o' Tooley Street. Went off shoutin', 'I'll evict, damme, I'll evict!' and a-shakin' of his stick."

"Trope will pay up, never fear."

"Trope ain't got it to pay, sir. We're the on'y lodgers in the house that's reg'lar pay. Times is mortal hard, sir. Them two chairmen and Bob can't hardly get enough fares in the run of a day to buy vittles, let alone clo'es and rent and such. Vace says people's took to shavin' 'emselves to save a penny. Maggs says everyone's dodgin' the chimbley law and he can't get a flue to sweep. Killick vows people walks for miles to cross the river by London Bridge to save 'emselves the price of a wherry. And his wife says nobody's eatin' oysters anymore. Why, sir, even that bloody pickpocket can't make a livin'! It's desperation times, sir, that's what it is."

"What did Trope say?"

"Went down on his knees and cadged for a bit more time. No good. 'I'll evict!' says Fatty in the chaise, and off he goes. That's why Trope's afire like all the rest of 'em over this yarn about a new colony in Ameriky. 'Tain't the free voyage nor the land that tempts 'em, sir, it's the notion o' free vittles for a twelvemonth. Nothin' in the world to worry about, a whole blessed year!"

"They'll never get on the list," Roger said. "The advertisement said discharged soldiers and sailors, and artisans, and husbandmen. None of these people—"

"Ah!" Tom grunted. "But discharged sojers and sailors ain't a-goin' to Ameriky. They know them parts too well. They know what His Majesty's 'subsistence' means, too. So Gov'ment's takin' anyone that's fool enough. I heard the talk in Wappin'. Knowin' ones down that way say the whole thing's a plot o' the Lord Mayor's to ship a couple o' thousand Lunnon poor across the Western Ocean, where they can't come back. It's to take the edge off o'

the city mob afore there's any trouble over the hard times."

"And a man's trade is no matter?"

"Not a ha'p'orth!"

"Not even an amateur highwayman?"

Tom Fuller sat straight up on the flock-bed and uttered an astonished oath. "You're cod-din', sir!"

"I was never so serious in my life."

IT WAS a quaint pilgrimage. Upon the day appointed by the Lords of Trade and Plantations, the Tropes and their lodgers left Tooley Street in a body and were joined by other migrants from Pickle Herring Street, Shad Thames and as far downriver as Rotherhithe. Roger wore his seaman's clothing. The "gentleman's rig," jackboots and all, was in a small and ancient portmanteau bought of a pawnbroker in the Borough Road and now carried between Tom and himself by a stick thrust under the straps. The short way to Whitehall lay across the great bend of the Thames, so they turned their backs on London Bridge and journeyed along the Borough Highway and Blackman Street, where they were joined by groups from Mint Street and Dirty Lane, from Love Lane, from Chalk Street and White Cross Street and Dead Man's Place and Bandyleg Walk, from all the queer congeries of Southwark. All carried their belong-

It was a quaint procession. The men sang and whistled as if going to a fair, the women chattered, babies squalled.

ings in small bundles. Here and there Roger noticed a sea-bag or the knapsack of an old soldier, but they were very few. The men sang and whistled as if going to a fair, women and children chattered in shrill cockney voices, and babies squalled. A pack of lean dogs crept humbly and hopefully after them all the way through Southwark, across the upper reach of Saint George's Fields and down to the Thames bank at King's Arms Stairs.

There the straggling procession halted and drew together, and discovered itself to be several hundred strong. Those who had a few pence to spare refreshed themselves with pints of flip at the Arms. There was much haggling with the watermen at the stairs, but at last the ferrying began.

Watching the crowded wherries across to Whitehall Stairs, Roger was reminded of another river and another passage. The date rang in his mind like a trumpet. It was just three years to a day since he and a party of Highland scouts had watched the English army cross the high spring waters of the Spey. He remembered the band's tune as the troops splashed over the ford—

Will ye play me fair,
Bonnie laddie, Highland laddie?

—and he heard again the harsh Gaelic curses of his men, and the sort of play they promised. That was six days before Culloden. He had crossed a good many rivers and some salt water since, and every passage had marked a little epoch. He wondered what sort of Rubicon he was crossing now.

AS they straggled up from Whitehall Stairs, the pilgrimage from Southwark found itself merged in a greater stream pouring towards the Cockpit from the city itself. The Cockpit was a solid mass of humanity. Amongst them stood little knots of discharged soldiers in their shabby red coats, or seamen with tarry slops and check shirts and the apple-tart naval cock to their hats; and a few—a very few—countrymen gazing open-mouthed at the throng about them, with their wives and children clinging close. From these could be heard the accents of all England—the border country, Yorkshire, Lancashire, the odd tongue of the Fens, the slow drawl of Kent, the singsong of the Cotswold country. Only the west country tongues were missing; they were awaiting the ships at Portsmouth. But through and above the hubbub rose and triumphed the sharp voices of London town. It was largely a cockney mob.

Few had thought to bring food, and none was willing to leave his place in the crawling procession to seek it at a tavern. They dared not put their bundles down in that tide of doubtful honesty, nor let their urchins stray out of reach. They clung to their sorry chattels and each other through the weary shuffling hours. The hungry group from Tooley Street finally edged its way indoors and along the halls, kept in line by bawling soldiers of the Whitehall guard, until at last it faced a battery of perspiring and short-tempered clerks in charge of a gentleman in a pink coat and an elegant three-tailed wig who was no doubt the "John Pownell, Esquire," of the advertisement. The day was far spent and so was Pownell's staff. Voices that had been sharp and exacting with the head of the ragged procession in the morning were listless and perfunctory about its tail. The cunning cockneys, listening to the questions asked and answered in the line ahead, had soon discovered what was expected of them. Each man in turn answered glibly, "carpenter," "shipwright," "smith," "mason," "joiner," "brickmaker" or "husbandman"—and passed on his way rejoicing.

A smell of unwashed flesh pervaded Whitehall's sedate halls and chambers in spite of open windows and the light breeze from the Thames; and the clack of their tongues, outside and in, added uproar to outrage. The mind of England's empire was downriver at Westminster, but here in Whitehall's offices beat its heart, the machine that moved half the world —gripped and possessed for the space of a day by London's *canaille*. What would happen if, instead of lying about their trades, they all started breaking windows? To be sure, there were blue-clad cavalry across the way; but half the Horse Guards had been disbanded after Culloden and quite possibly some of their old troopers were in this fetid throng.

Roger was aroused from these reflections by an irritated voice repeating, "Name? Name?" and found himself facing a bilious young man in a small tie-wig.

"Roger Sudden," he answered boldly. The quill raced and splattered.

"Are you registered in the book?"

"I'm afraid not."

The fellow broke into a peevish tirade. Did Sudden realize, had he the faintest notion, what a demned nuisance he was—he and the others who'd failed to register? It was distinctly stated—*distinctly* stated—in the *Gazette* that all persons must register by letter or in person by the seventh. It was a demned outrage. Serve him demned well right if the ticket was refused.

He called behind him to another tie-wig. "Another of 'em, Lorimer. Name, Sudden—Roger."

"Occupation?"

"Husbandman."

"Ha!"—quill racing— "If a close acquaintance with dirt means anything, the whole demned mob are husbandmen! Family?"

"None."

"No wife?"

"None."

"Fifty acres! Age?"

"Twenty-four."

"Transport?" This to a third tie-wig at the left.

Third Wig examined his register carefully and announced in a sour voice, "Demned if I know where to put him. *Charlton's* full. *Winchelsea's* full. *Everly, Merry Jacks, Beaufort*—they'll have to arrange more transports, demme, or close the list. Wait! There's room for a man or two in the *Fair Lady*, snow. Put him down for *Fair Lady*."

Again the quill. "Here you are!"

The ticket in his hand. "Next! Name?"

"Tom Fuller—and I want to sail along o' Mr. Sudden, there."

"Are you registered in the book?"

"No, sir, sorry, sir."

"Do you realize—"

"Beg pardon, sir. But is it cold-like in that country? I can't abide cold, never could."

The clerk pointed with his quill to a framed plaque on the wall, a weary gesture, as if he had done it many times this day. "There's the coat of arms of Nova Scotia. Observe the savage man. Observe his garments. Would you say the air was cold?"

The savage in the frame wore nothing but a kilt of flimsy feathers and a cap of similar feathers standing on end about his head. He looked brown and well-nourished in this airy costume.

Tom was impressed. "Proof enough," he said. "And there's a unicorn, too. I thought they on'y had them beasts in Afriky."

CHAPTER VI

THE FAIR LADY

"WHAT'S a snow?" Roger asked. Tom Fuller spat into the muddy Thames. "Nothing but a brig with a bit of a trys'l mast rigged close abaft the mainmast. A Dutch rig, I reckon. Most of 'em's small. I'd as soon cross the Western Ocean in this hoy."

They were passing downriver in the Greenwich tilt-boat and most of the passengers were, like themselves, bound for the transports in the lower Thames.

The tilt-boat fare had been too much for the artisans of Tooley Street, now part of the rabble tramping down Thames Street and the Ratcliff Highway towards the distant ships at Tilbury. The boat was passing Wapping in the sunset and the Pool was glorious, a sea of golden fire on which the squat black river-barges swam, unharmed, like wooden salamanders. Even Wapping was beautiful in this light, all the squalor hidden in the haze that softened its ragged outlines and wrapped its rooftops in a half-luminous veil of chimney smoke. A Londoner bound for the world's end might well have wept at such a sight.

There seemed to be no tears in the hoy. The little group of passengers seemed to be half-pay army officers with their wives and families and baggage, a great assortment of trunks, chests, boxes, portmanteaux and bundles, all clearly marked in new white paint with the owner's name, the name of his transport, and the magic words "Nova Scotia."

Roger regarded the grown-ups with some curiosity. A mixed lot, none very young, none very handsome, none very prosperous if appearances meant anything.

The men scarcely looked at the passing shores of the Thames. No doubt, going abroad was an old story to most of them. They were busy talking of old campaigns, addressing each other by their service titles. None seemed to have held a rank higher than captain. Roger wondered how many parties like this were going to Nova Scotia. Enough to leaven that crapulous cockney mass?

"Ah! There's our snow!" Tom Fuller said with satisfaction. "Good thing she hadn't dropped down to Gravesend like that quill-driver thought she might."

"Why?"

"We board her here at Greenhithe, nice and proper, and drop down the river to join t'other transports, innocent as lambs. The water-bailiffs won't trouble to search the transports; everyone aboard's s'posed to be a proper-examined settler for Ameriky. But if we had to go on down to Tilbury in the tilt-boat, we'd be overhauled proper. They'll be watchin' all the hoys and such that goes by Tilbury like a cat at a mouse-hole, lookin' for the fifty guineas reward that's offered for us. 'Struth!"

The master of the tilt-boat swung his ponderous tiller, roaring to his two-man crew, "Watch them sheets!" and to his passengers, "Heads, there! Mind the boom!" He laid his craft alongside the moored snow by a neat calculation of wind and tide, one of those off-hand miracles which Thamesmen perform as if by instinct. The snow was not impressed. A harsh voice on the deck above objected loudly.

"God's wounds! Who are ye and what's your license to lay me aboard in this fashion?"

"This is the Gravesend tilt-boat—" began the master of the hoy.

The voice of the *Fair Lady* became manifest in a dark, rough-bearded face leaning over the bulwark in the dusk.

"Damn and blast your tilt-boat, and you, too, ye bloody—"

"You, sir!" snapped one of the half-pay officers. "Mind your language in the presence of these ladies or, hell confound me, I'll swarm aboard and put a yard of steel through your drunken belly!"

The *Fair Lady* declared promptly that, 'Od rot and damn it, that was a game two could play; whereupon several of the half-pay officers snatched out their hangers and, amid shrieks of alarm from wives and offspring, leaped to the deck of the snow. At once the bearded man set up a bellow.

"Boarded, by God! All hands repel boarders!" He whipped out a cutlass and flourished it in a drunken but determined fashion, while from the forecastle ran half a dozen seamen, looking astonished, but warlike enough with cutlasses, handspikes and belaying pins. From the boarding party, from the master of the tilt-boat crying encouragement from his poop, from his two men striving to hold fast to the snow in the surge of the outgoing tide, from the belligerent master of the *Fair Lady* and his loyal and strong-lunged crew, there rose upon the evening air such a chorus of oaths that it seemed the fair cheeks of all England must blanch, let alone those of the gentlewomen in the hoy.

At this point, Roger and Tom swung the old portmanteau aboard the snow and followed themselves. Then Roger, stepping forward, cried, "One moment, gentlemen! There's some misunderstanding, surely?"

The *Fair Lady's* master looked him up and down.

"Who might you be?" he demanded in amazement.

The half-pay officers looked astonished. A common tarpaulin thrusting himself into their righteous quarrel and talking like a gentleman!

"My name is Roger Sudden and this is my companion, Thomas Fuller. We are accredited passengers in your good ship to Nova Scotia, if you'll do me the honor of examining these papers." He proffered the tickets of admission.

The master took them suspiciously, called for a lantern and, when it was brought, stared at the papers and Roger and Tom with a most owlish gravity for several minutes without saying anything.

"And now, if you're satisfied, sir," Roger pursued smoothly, "the tilt-boat can proceed with these gentlemen and their families down the river."

The officers took the hint, a little sheepish now, but slapping their swords into their sheaths and vowing that, by Gad, if Sudden hadn't spoken when he did there'd have been no master nor crew to take him to America, not by a damned sight. They were officers and gentlemen, damme, and on His Majesty's half-pay list, by God—and were not to be insulted by any Billingsgate rascal that . . .

The voices faded over the side and down the river.

"Very neatly done, sir," said a voice in the dusk.

ROGER turned and saw a tall elderly man in a blue cloak and a silver-laced hat with the immense cocks favored in Marlborough's time, and at his side a young woman in a ridingcloak with the hood thrown back. In the light of the master's lantern they looked to be father and daugher. The girl's face was in shadow, but Roger noted that her hair had reddish glints.

"I feared a blood-letting," the elderly gentleman went on, "until you stepped into the thick of the blades and settled matters. Not many men would have tried it."

"Not every man is so anxious to board a ship, find a berth and get something to eat," returned Roger lightly.

"'Ods heart!" exclaimed Black Beard. "Berth, he says! Eat, he says! My gay cock, I'll give ye a hammock to sling for'ard and my leave to bite your fingernails till breakfast time. We make two meals a day on the *Fair Lady*, no more if ye was a royal duke in disguise—and will someone tell me what a gentleman's doin' in them clo'es?"

"Going to Nova Scotia, I hope," said Roger, and picked up the portmanteau.

"Ha!" coughed the tall gentleman. "Perhaps you will give us the pleasure of your company at supper, sir? We, too, are for Nova Scotia."

Roger's eyes went to Tom Fuller.

"And your companion, of course," added the tall gentleman quickly.

"That's very kindly of ye, sir, and you too, ma'am," spoke up Tom.

"Perhaps Captain Huxley will join us?" suggested the young woman.

But the *Fair Lady's* master was in no mood for company or supper. He reeled away to his cabin, calling loudly for his steward and a bottle of gin, and was seen no more until morning.

In the small cabin under the poop, by the light of a pair of candles, Roger gained a clear look at his host. He must have stood well over six feet in youth, but his shoulders had the stoop which comes to tall men after fifty, and the stoop was a positive crouch here under the low deck beams. His large wig fell in a mass of well-powdered curls about his shoulders, with two tresses hanging forward, one each side of his lean neck. His eyebrows were black and bushy. A pair of eyes of a blue so pale as to be well-nigh colorless twinkled beneath them. He had a long pointed nose and a thin mouth, and his cheek was marred with an old sword-cut on the right side which gave a whimsical twist to his smile. He had thrown off the cloak and appeared in a red surtout of a military cut, with immense cuffs and silver buttons which, like his hat, had a flavor of Lord Marlborough's time.

Roger's glance flicked carelessly over the

young woman—and came back again. She was not beautiful. She had red hair for one thing—a sad blemish—and an independent spirit for another, since she scorned to disguise it with powder as most red-haired ladies would have done. The color of her eyes was a matter of doubt in the light of the cheap chandler's dips. Gray? Blue? He was not sure. They were large, at any rate, and clear and steady. Her nose was neither good nor bad—an ordinary nose. In the candlelight the shadow it cast on her cheek was small. Her mouth was too large to be fashionable and too small to be generous, yet the lower lip was full and red, and both were firm. A puzzling mouth. It might be indulgent and it might be rather cruel. If a woman's mouth were the key to her soul (and Roger had found it so), this one's soul was an enigma. The rest of her, in a green gown, was slim, as tall as himself, perhaps a shade taller.

This inspection he accomplished swiftly and exactly, from old habit, as he would have inspected her in passing in the street or anywhere. He guessed her age at seventeen, but her poise and assurance were those of an older woman. He was not prepared for what followed.

"Very neatly done, sir," the stranger said to Roger. "I feared a bloodletting until you stepped in and settled matters."

"I am John Foy, late captain of His Majesty's Dragoons," said the white-wigged man, "and this is madame, my wife."

"Charmed!" uttered Roger, astonished, and recovering quickly, "My name's Sudden—Roger Sudden—late of Kilnhurst, Kent, and Oxford University. And this is Tom Fuller, late of His Majesty's Navy." There was a trace of irony in this and the girl looked at him sharply; but his smile was disarming, his smile implied only a sense of comradeship in the great adventure of leaving England.

She rapped on the bulkhead, calling "Jenny!" and a womanservant appeared from the adjoining cabin. Tom, with the prompt handiness of a sailor, showed Jenny how to sling the table-board from its hooks overhead and helped her set out the plates and provisions. She accepted his help in silence and with a rather comical mixture of wonder and disapproval. Plainly she was not used to such guests at her mistress's board.

"You're going out as a gentleman volunteer, I take it?" John Foy murmured, passing the wine.

"Something like that," Roger said.

"What are you going to do in Nova Scotia?" asked cool young Mrs. Foy.

He shrugged. "Make my fortune, like everyone else, I suppose. Just how, I don't know."

Mrs. Foy addressed herself to Tom. "And you?"

"A-follerin' of Mr. Sudden, ma'am."

"I see."

From a hamper against the bulkhead, Jenny had conjured bread, some excellent Cheshire cheese, a cold roast fowl, a gallipot of good Sussex butter, a bottle of brandy and four bottles of red Lisbon. John Foy ate little, remarking that as a man became worn in the teeth he could no longer take his stomach for granted. But he addressed himself vigorously to the Lisbon and later the brandy. Mrs. Foy ate with a healthy appetite and Roger felt encouraged to do the same. Tom needed no encouragement from anyone.

"I feel guilty," Roger said at last, surveying the wreck of the fowl and the cheese and three empty bottles.

"Please don't," said Mrs. Foy. "We've private supply enough in the hold to last us a year."

"One can't be sure in a new colony," Foy explained gravely, and added, "There was not enough room in the other transports for our supplies and furniture, nor could they warrant a separate cabin for my wife and her maid. That's why we're in the *Fair Lady*."

"Are there any other passengers?" Roger asked.

"No more cabin room. Captain Huxley said he'd take six or seven more men in the forecastle, that's all."

"He seems a swine."

The eyes of the Foys went large and round. Mrs. Foy gestured. Foy said softly, "These bulkheads are very thin, my friend."

ROGER changed the subject. "If the snow can't take more than ten passengers, why is she making the voyage?"

"I'm told she's to carry some special supplies and will act as some sort of despatch boat in Nova Scotia. There will be plenty for her to do."

"Such as?"

Foy gave him a shrewd glance. "How much do you know about the expedition, Mr. Sudden?"

"Only that the Lord Mayor's found a convenient way to ship his poor across the sea."

"Ah, you mistake an effect for a cause! His Majesty's Government hasn't voted forty thousand pounds merely to build an almshouse on the shores of Nova Scotia, my friend. This is a matter of high politics. Do you know anything of the war against the French in America?"

"Nothing."

Foy's long fingers played with his brandy glass. "Do you know anything of America at all?"

"Only that we've ten or a dozen colonies scattered along the Atlantic seaboard and the French have everything else."

"Humph! The French have Canada, which lies along the north, and they've followed the great lakes and rivers into the heart of the continent, which gives 'em a claim to the whole hinterland—or so they say. That's by the way, of course. The point is, the French and English are forever at war in America, regardless of what the diplomats may be saying in Europe at the moment. At present there is a lull, but never peace. There will never be peace in America until one people have it all. The strategy of the French is to pin the English colonies to the coast, to throttle them by shutting off their trade with the interior. The English plan is more simple. They aim to seize Canada by the throat"—he drew a finger amongst the crumbs on the board—"which is the estuary of the Saint Lawrence River. With that in their hands they can choke the life out of the French empire in America."

"And what has that to do with us?" Roger asked, politely.

Again the finger scrabbling on the board. "Suppose you want to choke a man and you discover he wears a sharp pin in his stock?"

Foy's tongue was a little thick—the brandy on top of the Lisbon, no doubt—but this potserious talk of his filled the time. Roger flicked a glance at Mrs. Foy, expecting to see boredom in her eyes, or amusement at most, and was startled to see her leaning forward with a pair of shapely elbows on the board, eyes brilliant and lips parted avidly. He was a little shocked. A woman should not look like that except when one is making love.

He recalled himself. "I'd try to remove the pin first, I suppose."

"Yes," she said, with that eager intentness, "but how? You couldn't just make a snatch at it."

Foy seized the subject again, with tipsy gravity. "No, my dear Sudden, the thing must be done with care. The pin must be plucked

swiftly when the time comes, but first one must contrive to get one's hand in position —close to the pin, d'you see?—and one must know exactly where to seize the pin, and how much force to apply, and in what direction. In short, sir—*hup!*—to abandon all these playwords, England must build a fortress and naval station near the mouth of the Saint Lawrence."

"And what is the—ah—pin, sir?"

"A fortress called Louisburg, on the island of Cape Breton. From it the French can guard the Saint Lawrence or descend upon the Atlantic seaboard as they choose."

"Louisburg!" Tom Fuller said. "Why, sir, the colonists captured that place back in '45. I knowed some lads as was there wi' the fleet."

"So they did, Fuller, so they did! Amazing! A rabble of farmers and fishermen and townsmen against the strongest fortress outside Europe. They deserved something for their hardihood, so fortune smiled upon them —the French had too small a garrison and too little powder. The English colonies were jubilant, I tell you, for with the fall of Louisburg all Canada was doomed. And then, sir, then came the peace last year, when England handed Louisburg back to France—for what? For the expulsion of Charles Stuart from French soil! The colonists in America were furious. They're furious still. They've raised such a rumpus that His Majesty's government feels it must do something towards restoring the position. And so, my friends, this expedition of ours is to create an English fortress within striking distance of Louisburg, aimed at Louisburg, designed for nothing else but a blow at French power in Canada."

"I see," Roger said. But he did not see and did not care. It was rather involved and he suspected the man was drunk. He murmured diffidently, "Why is His Majesty's government sending out a rabble of poor Londoners? Not one in twenty knows one end of a musket from the other!"

"Partly they're to offset the Acadians, the native French in Nova Scotia, which has been under the English flag nigh forty years without an English settlement. But chiefly they're to clear the forest, till the land and fish the sea, to build sawmills and grist mills—in short, they're to create a handy source of supplies for the army and fleet which will some day move against Canada."

"But that will take years!"

A shrug. "Ten years, twenty years, what does it matter? His Majesty's government is laying long plans."

"And where shall we get a garrison for this fortress of ours?"

"From Louisburg! The English garrison there is about to hand it back to the French, under the terms of the peace, with all its stores and cannon. When we arrive on the coast, the English troops will simply move down the coast to our new town. Like a game of chess, isn't it?"

"And how do you like being a pawn?" asked Roger of Mrs. Foy.

Her eyes shone. "What a game!"

CHAPTER VII

"IF 'EE STAY, LACKADAY!"

JOB HUXLEY of the *Fair Lady* was, he was fond of saying, a man who had traveled far and lived rough, and these pursuits had given him, amongst other things, a vast thirst and a stock of oaths which were the awe and admiration of his crew. There were four seamen, a cook, a steward, a boatswain and a master's mate, all of whom lived in the forecastle, although the master's mate, a morose man named Cheeny, had the privacy of a canvas partition in a corner. The men were the common run of Wapping, with the marks of old service about them. One and all, they had traveled as far and lived as roughly as their master, but they went in great fear of him and told Roger that Old Hux was a holy terror, no mistake.

Old Hux confirmed this himself the day after that snug supper in the Foy cabin. When the Foys came in to breakfast with him in the small stern compartment called by ship custom the "great" cabin, he informed them bluntly that he would have no more of this "coddling common sailors and steerage people" in their quarters.

"Mr. Sudden is a gentleman," began Foy stiffly.

"He wears a damned ungentlemanly rig," retorted Old Hux.

"Do you swear in front of my wife?" demanded Foy in a passion.

"I swear in the presence of Almighty God every time I open my mouth and who is your wife to God or me? I am the master of this vessel, damme! If ye don't like it, change your berth."

"You're not in a good humor this morning, Captain," suggested Mary Foy placidly.

"I am not in a good humor any morning," said the master of the *Fair Lady,* but he laughed and looked younger. A man of five-and-forty perhaps, with piercing blue eyes set in a broad frame of bronze skin and black beard. His black hair was pigtailed like any seaman's. He had worked aft from the hawse and boasted that all the soap in the lazaret could not take the tar from his hands; but now that he was aft, he knew his privileges and he dared anyone to abuse them.

Having put the cabin passengers in their place, he stalked out on deck in an old long-skirted coat, cut very square, with tarnished

brass buttons, and a round hat cocked at the back with a single leather button; a pair of white breeches badly in need of a laundress, and wrinkled black stockings and stout shoes with enormous pinchback buckles. Roger and Tom were leaning against the foremast shrouds, enjoying the sunshine and the view along the Thames. Old Hux crooked a thick finger and they came to him, Roger with some reluctance—it was too much like being whistled up, dog fashion. Old Hux wasted no words.

"I've just told them people in the cabin that I'll have no more o' this winin' and dinin' my steerage passengers. Stay where ye belong. I'm a rough dog and can bite."

"Yes, sir," Tom said, with a respectful pull at his forelock.

Roger was not inclined to be so docile, but at this moment there was a diversion, a boat hailing alongside and Tom running to catch a painter heaved over the bulwark.

"What d'ye want?" snapped Old Hux over the side.

Four men sat in the boat at the oars, and a fat man in a round blue jacket and cocked hat was at the tiller.

"A good look at your passengers and crew," said the fat man importantly.

"Blast your eyes," said Old Hux, "my people suit *me* well enough. What's your business?"

The fat man pulled a paper from his jacket pocket. "A seaman wanted for highway robbery. Gray eyes, rings in his ears, large scar on the right hand, age about five-and-thirty. Reward offered by two officers of His Majesty's Twentieth Foot—"

"Avast! You and His Majesty's foot! He's not aboard. I've a man with a timber leg and a bosun with a deadlight over his larboard eye—"

"I'll come aboard."

"Come aboard and ye'll find yourself in the Thames, next minute! 'Od rot your impudence! Rings in his ears! Half the men on the river's got rings in their ears—and you'd have one in your snout if I'd my way. Damme, what next!"

The fat man drew another paper from his pocket. "Wanted for highway robbery, suspected of high treason, slim man, black eyes, blue surtout, jackboots, comes from Kent, looks like a gentleman—"

"More than I can say for you, blubbergut! Shove off!"

"In the name of the King—"

"In the name o' hell's whole kingdom, shove off or I'll souse ye in Thames water, and that crew of ugly rascals with ye! Cast off that painter, there!"

Tom dropped the painter's end as if it were hot. The Thames swept the boat away at once, the fat man yelling and shaking his fist, his men snatching up oars in too great a hurry and fouling all together, the crew of the *Fair Lady* jeering at them for a lot of lubbers, and crews of other craft moored below running to their bulwarks to join in the fun.

Huxley turned and favored Roger and Tom with a long, slow wink.

"Thank you," Roger said.

"Keep your thanks," growled Old Hux. "I ask no favors and I grant none. D'ye think I'd stand by and let that fat fool take two pair o' hands out o' my ship? I'm short o' men—all along o' them thick-headed Lords o' Trade. Where's the seaman willin' to hand, reef and steer on the Western Ocean when he can idle his passage over in the hold of a transport? Settlers! Ye'll bear a hand this voyage, my brave boys, and so'll them others that's to come aboard tomorrow. Oh, I'll work ye, never fear! Job Huxley's the boy to eddicate a seaman—or a gentleman, come to that! But mind this—bear a hand and he'll treat ye well. Bear a hand and Job's a lamb. Ask any o' them scoundrels for'ard."

He stalked away and left them to their thoughts.

NEXT morning the rest of the *Fair Lady's* passengers came in a wherry from Greenhithe, half a dozen hangdog fellows, deserters from the King's ships by the look of them, tempted out of hiding now by the disappearance of the press gangs and the prospect of free victuals in America. None had more baggage than a bundled handkerchief.

With his passenger list complete, Old Hux stirred this curiously gathered crew and dropped down the river to Tilbury. There lay the transports for Nova Scotia, and as the snow slid past one after another in a search for moorings, her crew called off the names —*Charlton, Winchelsea, Wilmington, Merry Jacks, Alexander, Beaufort, Rockhampton, Cannon, Everley, London, Brotherhood, Baltimore.* The ships were of four or five hundred tons each. Two were old navy frigates. Every deck was a-swarm with men, women and children, each hull with its wide tumble-home seemed to bulge with the press of humanity inside, and against each curved wooden flank clustered the bumboats of Tilbury. Ports were open and black with heads chaffering with the raucous bumboat women for gin and cheese and other cheap items of the river trade, passed up to them through the nettings. The weatherbeaten hulls, the nudging swarm of boats, were like nothing so much as a herd of sows suckling a greedy litter on the broad water of the Thames.

The *Fair Lady* rounded to at a mooring below the fleet, and there she lay, and there the fleet lay, for days that grew into weeks. Mr. Foy after a few days took his lady ashore to stay at an inn. The transport captains spent their time in visits to taverns ashore, or visit-

ing each other in their gigs, when sounds of song came drifting from stern cabins on the evening air, and bottles on the tide. The bumboat trade went slack as the meager coins of the emigrants were spent, and the boats disappeared except for one or two making a hopeful daily round of the ships. Once there was a burst of activity aboard the transports. Sounds of carpentry drifted down to the *Fair Lady* from morn to night and the Thames wore a drifting wig of shavings. From the deck of each moored ship sprouted a number of queer wood-and-canvas structures that set the whole riverfront agog. The things looked like fat little chimneys. Were they planning to stay off Tilbury for ever? Rumors flew. Someone remarked a curious resemblance between these transports and the prison hulks moored off the Thames marshes lower down. Was it all a scheme to lock up London's poor?

Job Huxley solved the mystery for his crew one evening late in April, returning in the twilight from a visit to the *Wilmington*. He seemed in a jovial mood and Tom Fuller made bold to ask, "Them new things rigged aboard the transports, sir—might they be chimbleys, now?"

Old Hux paused with a heavy hand gripping each side of the gangway. He laughed, and the teeth flashed white in his black beard. "Chimneys? Aye, they might be. They might be pigeon-cotes, or kennels for such hounds as you! They might be sentry-boxes for to watch the tribe o' thieves they've shipped. But they ain't! They're air-pipes, begod! 'Ventilators'—that's the word. A new invention o' the Lords o' Trade. Whether it's to let in fresh air or to pass off the stink o' the passengers, I couldn't say—not bein' eddicated like the Lords o' Trade. But it's for to 'prevent sickness amongst the emigrants'—them's the words. D'ye ever hear such nonsense, eh? Why, too much clean air'll kill that dunghill spawn o' London like a pox! They ain't used to it and can't stand it. 'Slike keel-haulin' a man that's never even had his face washed afore. Stands to reason." Away he reeled to his cabin.

"Ventilators!" muttered the lugubrious Mr. Cheeny.

"What'll happen in a seaway, with the decks awash, say?" demanded the boatswain.

"All them openin's in the ship!"

"Drownded," a seaman said indignantly. "Like rats."

"Lords o' Trade!" snorted Tom Fuller.

"How's the crew to bowse and haul with all that clutter about the deck?" the boatswain said.

Nobody seemed to know. Aboard the transports, nobody seemed to care.

May Day came, with the ships still idle in the river and their ragged population wandering about the decks like penned cattle or

CAPTAIN HUXLEY

standing at the bulwarks in long rows for hours on end, staring emptily at the green Kent shore. The fleet had become a joke in the river. Crazy little wherries manned by urchins begging pennies from the ships had long since given up the transports for poor business, but they thumbed their dirty noses as the wherries drifted past and cried a doggerel up to the glum faces at the rails.

Goin' to Ameriky?
Bring me back a parakee!
If 'ee stay,
Lackaday,
Lord save Ameriky!

BUT suddenly things began to move. Barges came down-Thames from the city, and moored alongside in half-dozens, in dozens, laden with cargoes that silenced all the gibing tongues; boxes of blankets, of woolens, of shoes, of lines and nets for the fishery, of stationery, surveyors' instruments, seeds, medicines. Thousands of bricks, barrels of rum, beef and pork, barrels of ship-biscuit and flour and peas, a full equipment for a hospital. Many chests of arms, of axes, of hatchets, of knives. Casks of sugar, of vinegar, of powder and shot. Coils of rope and cases of tools. Artillery—mostly field pieces and swivel guns. Furniture. Live cattle and pigs and poultry.

Astonishing! Somewhere behind the distant smoke of London was a will and a purpose. Someone in that warren of Whitehall offices had an eye fixed on America.

The last lighter slid away empty, the last bale was whisked into the hold. The transports unshipped their cargo booms and bent their sails. An air of expectancy hung over the fleet where before there had been only despair.

John and Mary Foy came off to the *Fair Lady* in a galley piled high with new purchases. Job Huxley greeted them curtly and let fall a growl about the space below being cluttered with private stores. Most of it was wine in casks—Madeira, Lisbon and port, some claret, several cases of brandy and a butt of ale. Mr. Foy seemed prepared for a long sojourn in a desert.

His lady wore a light gown of some flowered stuff and a milkmaid hat tied with a white ribbon under her chin. Roger saw for the first time the true color of her eyes, a strange hue, a clear sea-green with faint gold specks. She gave him a swift smile and vanished into the cabin with her maid.

Said Old Hux, "Well, sir, you're in the know, it seems. When do we sail?"

Foy shrugged. "I was simply told to get aboard, Captain. I'm told that all's ready, bar the naming of a commander for the expedition."

"Zounds! That'll take Whitehall a twelvemonth! What ship's he to sail in?"

"In none of these. There's a sloop of war awaiting him and his suite at Spithead."

"Her name?"

"*Sphinx*. 'The Sphinx with her enigma.'"

Old Hux slapped a disgusted hand on the rail. "Who said that?"

"Sophocles."

"Damme, there's a new lord on the Board o' Trade and Plantations every day!"

The word had come. The new captain-general had sailed for his distant province from Spithead, and the transports were to follow at once.

The great fleet awoke with a cheer that passed from ship to ship, and the emigrants crowded the rails with wild, rapt faces, shouting over the water. Their tumult brought the shore folk out of their houses and bargemen from their cabins.

"Ye'd think they was goin' to a fair," Tom said soberly.

"So they are—a damned rum fair," the boatswain said, and spat. "They'll be playin' at cock-shies with the Indians afore the summer's out—at the wrong end o' the hitch."

"Hands there! Man the capstan!" roared Old Hux. "D'ye think I want to be the last ship out o' the river? Mr. Cheeny, get the head sails on her!"

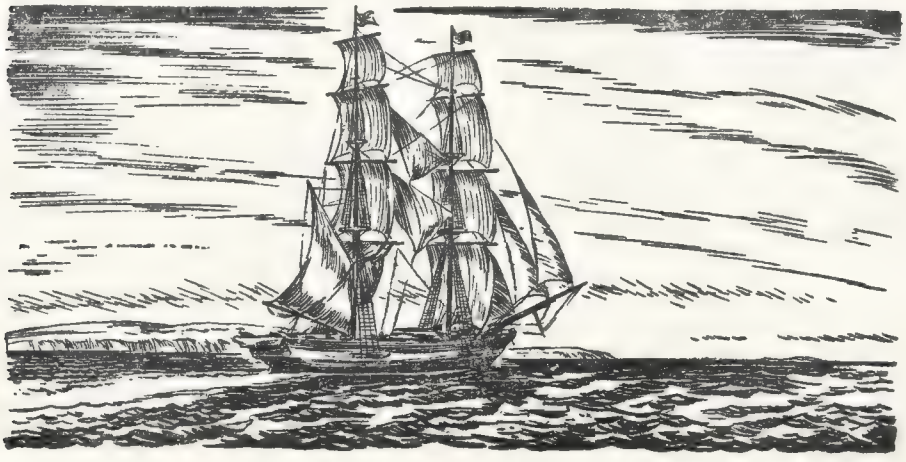
The snow swung neatly under the thrust of her headsails and the river current did the rest.

Away she went on the yellow ebb tide, with hands swarming aloft to shake out canvas and the flat shores of Thames-mouth sliding past. The Essex shore withdrew mysteriously into the offing. The Kent shore held, low and green, with a rim of black mud as the tide ebbed.

Tom Fuller gave Roger a nudge and a jerk of his head, and grinned. Over there somewhere, beyond the marshes, Jemmie Calter's lonely bones were swinging in the breeze, keeping that endless watch upon the Rochester road. The adventurers had cheated him of company.

Behind the *Fair Lady* as she passed the Nore, the white canvas pyramids of the transports filled and shone in the sunny May morning. Distance lent them grace and beauty and erased all their smudges and patches, and the sight of that thronging canvas was stirring even to Roger's landsman blood. In such a fashion fleets of Englishmen had gone out, again and again through the long years, to seek and woo the golden woman of the world.

(End of Part I)



ILLUSTRATED BY GEORGE WERT

OIL FIELD LIAR

More Tall Tales Gib Morgan Told

Collected by MODY C. BOATRIGHT

IN our August issue we printed six "tall tales" about Gib Morgan, oil fields counterpart of the lumberjacks' Paul Bunyan, and the Pecos Bill of the cowboys. Here are four more fabulous fibs culled from the Morgan legend by Professor Boatright, who is on the faculty of the University of Texas and an editor of the Texas Folklore Society publications. We expect to print additional tales of Gib from time to time.—K. S. W.

I

GIB'S BOARDING HOUSE

WHEN Gib Morgan was in West Virginia, more as an accommodation to his friends than anything else, he put up a boarding house for oil-field workers. The thing that made his place famous was his buckwheat pancakes. The men would crowd his place every morning and demand more and more hot cakes. Gib had to enlarge his dining room and get more and larger griddles. But he still couldn't keep ahead of his trade.

So he finally had to build a new plant altogether. He bought a dozen of the largest concrete mixers he could find and steam engines to turn them and set them up on a hill a mile away. Into these mixers his workmen dumped flour and milk and eggs and other ingredients —the exact recipe is still a trade secret—and when the batter had reached a certain creamy consistency it was turned into a pipeline leading to the kitchen. The griddles were the bottoms of 43,000-barrel oil tanks, each heated by a gas well underneath it.

At first, Gib had trouble keeping the irons greased, but he solved that problem by strapping sides of fat bacon to the feet of strong Negroes and having them skate over the irons. Seven big strapping men skimmed over the hot surface of each griddle continuously. They were followed by another crew who handled the batter hoses leading from the pipeline. Another crew with shovels turned the cakes over, and a fourth took them up and tossed them to the waiters.

Melted butter and maple syrup flowed through a pipe along the half-mile counters,

and at each seat was a spigot from which the customer drew as much as he wanted.

Gib fed twenty-five thousand oil-field workers at a time. So many people came out of mere curiosity to see Gib's place that they were about to crowd out his regular customers. So Gib had to put up a sign: ONLY DRILLERS AND TOOL DRESSERS FED HERE.

II

GIB'S HOTEL

BUT after Spindletop came in and Gib came to Texas and saw the thousands of people that were crowding Beaumont without any place to stay, he decided he would put up a hotel for the general public. The building was forty stories high with ten high-speed elevators to bring the people up and down. When they stepped out of the elevator, no matter which floor, there was a narrow-gauge railroad with a train waiting to take them to their rooms. In each room were a number of taps—one for ice water, one for bourbon, one for rye, and one for Scotch, one for Tom Collins, one for Old Fashioned, and so on.

But the most remarkable thing about the hotel was its adaptation to the climate. Gib had noticed that throughout Texas and Oklahoma when a guest came in, he always asked for a south or east room. He never wanted a north or west room. So Gib built his hotel without any north or west rooms. Every guest who registered would be assigned to a south or east room. This would go on until all the rooms were filled. Every guest would go to bed in a room with a south or east exposure. But when those who had gone to bed first would wake up in the morning, they would look out

through north or west windows and see the railroad tracks.

Gib's hotel was mounted on a turntable, but by the time his guests found it out, they were so pleased with the service, especially the spigot service, that they didn't mind.

III

GIB AS OPERATOR

GIB would say one thing for the mountain people in West Virginia—they might be suspicious of a stranger at first, but once you made friends with them, they were the most loyal people on earth. He remembered one man in particular to whom he took a liking. Gib gave him a job as tool dresser and taught him to drill.

After Gib had completed a couple of wells in the West Virginia field, he decided to go into the oil business for himself. He didn't have much money, but he had seen men get rich on less. The first thing he did was to get up a block of leases. Then he began to sell interests in order to get capital to put down a well.

He had all sorts of trouble from the beginning. He hadn't got down very far when the hole caved in and had to be cased. He had to sell more interests to buy casing. Then he struck a hard slanting formation and got a crooked hole. It took two weeks' work with a side reamer to straighten it up. He had to sell more interests to meet his payroll. He lost his tools and had expensive fishing jobs and had to sell still more interests.

He'd been so busy that he hadn't had much time for bookkeeping, but one day he got out his pencil and began figuring, adding up all the interests he had sold. They came to a hundred and fifty per cent.

Gib thought it over and decided he'd better leave the country for a while. He left between sundown and sunup. He went to the South Sea Islands, to Russia, to South America and to many other places where he had many remarkable adventures, and when he finally came back to the United States, his venture into oil promotion seemed to have been forgotten. In fact he had forgotten it himself.

Then one time, fully fifty years after he had first got up the block of leases, he went into the hill country of West Virginia fishing. One day as he was following a stream upward, he kept thinking that the scenery looked familiar.

After a while he came in sight of an oil derrick. There was a fire under the boiler and the walking beam was moving up and down. He supposed he was approaching a new wildcat, and he was afraid he might be mistaken for an oil scout. But he walked on toward it.

Sitting on the driller's seat was an old man with white whiskers reaching down to his waist. He jumped down from the stool, ran and met Gib and hugged him. "Hello, Gib," he said in a squeaky voice. "I knowed you'd come back. After five years my toolie quit me. Said you wasn't coming back. But I knowed you'd come."

Then Gib remembered that in his hurry to get away he had forgotten to tell the driller on tour to knock off.

IV

HOW GIB DRILLED ON PIKE'S PEAK

THE only other place where Gib ever drilled in country as perpendicular as West Virginia was in Colorado. He was then working for Standard Oil of New Jersey. Their head geologist had located a well just by making a cross on the map, and Gib was sent to drill it. When he got out there, he found that the rock hound had put that cross right smack dab on top of Pike's Peak. The crew wanted to set up down in a valley somewhere. They said the brass hats back in New Jersey wouldn't know the difference anyway. But Gib said no. He hadn't seen a location he couldn't drill on yet, and he wasn't going to be stumped at his age.

So they snaked the timbers up and built a derrick on the top of Pike's Peak. But when they got the rig up, there wasn't any room for the engine and boiler. The nearest piece of level ground big enough to put them on was twenty-three miles below. It took forty-six miles of belting to connect the power plant, and a belt that long will stretch a good deal. They had to replace it every few days to take up the slack. Gib saved all the pieces they cut off and had enough leather to keep his boots half-soled for the rest of his life.

It was too far to walk from the engine to the rig, so Gib bought a mountain mule to ride back and forth. At first he was a little bit leery about riding the mule down, but the natives said there wasn't any danger. All the mules in that country were used to mountains. They were sure-footed and never stumbled. Thus assured, Gib got on the critter to ride him down to the engine. As he rode he could see the mule's head between the stirrups.

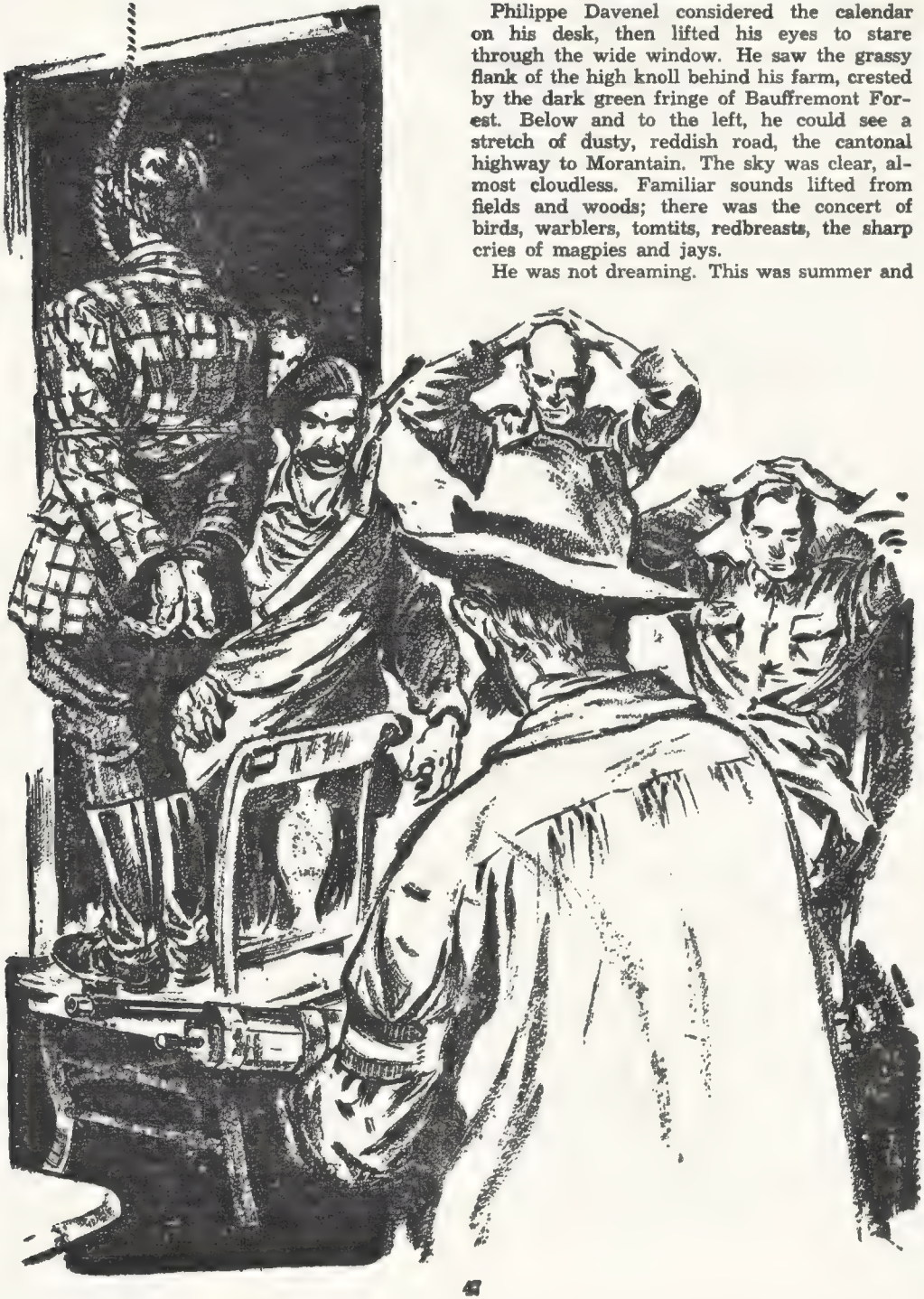
When he got about half-way down he felt something warm on the back of his neck. He ran his hand under his overcoat collar and when he drew it back, it didn't smell like Hoyt's Cologne. He decided that while the mule might be safe enough, he would prefer to get about some other way. After that when he wanted to go from the engine to the rig or from the rig to the engine, he just threw his saddle on the belt and rode it up or down.

THE KING OF DUPES

By
GEORGES SURDEZ

"Come on," Joseph called out, "die like a Frenchman, even if you couldn't live like one!"

ILLUSTRATED BY EDD ASHE



HE'S STILL around? You say nobody knows him?"

"That's right, Captain. He's not from around here."

"Don't call me captain."

Philippe Davenel considered the calendar on his desk, then lifted his eyes to stare through the wide window. He saw the grassy flank of the high knoll behind his farm, crested by the dark green fringe of Bauffremont Forest. Below and to the left, he could see a stretch of dusty, reddish road, the cantonal highway to Morantain. The sky was clear, almost cloudless. Familiar sounds lifted from fields and woods; there was the concert of birds, warblers, tomtits, redbreasts, the sharp cries of magpies and jays.

He was not dreaming. This was summer and

The farmers took their chances breaking the laws of the French State as well as the regulations of the Germans.

he was at home in Eastern France, yet several hundred people over an area of many square miles were growing more and more nervous because of a lone prowler. German armored patrols were accepted, taken so much for granted that folks rarely turned to look at the sinister vehicles bristling with machine guns—but one unidentified man was sufficient to disturb these rugged farmers!

Davenel felt an obscure anger because of this. That fear seeped into them easily was one of the manifestations of an inescapable fact, that he and his people were conquered. It was not physical fear, for they took their chances breaking the laws of the French State and the regulations of the Germans without hesitation. But inside, they were jittery, fearful—the metal of their spirit was softening. He sensed the same uneasiness within himself, yet he was a powerful man, tall and deep-chested, not much over thirty-five. On his face was obstinate pride, and even wearing the garments of a farmer, he looked like a leader, a chieftain. Perhaps because the ground on which he lived had nourished people of his blood, people of his name, for several centuries.

"Why is everybody so worried about this man?" he asked at last. Possibly because he speculated and feared himself.

"Well, because nobody knows who he is, what he is, what he's after." Joseph was a husky, middle-aged farmer, a veteran of the First World War. "It's been five days and nights he's been wandering and wandering. He hides from the cops, he hides from the Boches, and he tries to hide from us. Maybe he's a spy for the Boches, snooping around playing he's nuts. Then the women worry about the kids, because he may be a real nut. When the asylums were smashed up, a lot of nuts got turned loose—"

"They've all been rounded up by now."

"Who checked up on that, Cap—Monsieur Philippe?" The farmer was very earnest and sensible. "We—some of our fellows, I mean—hailed him the other night, and he was off like a hare. Two kids came across him yesterday morning, and he ran. They say he looks wild, crazy."

"Inform the gendarmes."

"We don't like to do it. To start with, maybe he's an English flyer trying to make it to Switzerland. Then the gendarmes would have to search the woods for him, and they'd come across other things they shouldn't know. You know how cops are. They've got to make out reports, and those reports are submitted to the Boche cops every so often. Public Safety, that's called."

"Why not corner him and ask him who he is, and what he wants?"

"We want your permission first, in case we should have to—" Joseph made a twisting motion. As his hands were a foot long and eight inches wide, the gesture was not reassuring. "See, once we stop him and ask him questions, if he hasn't a good story, we can't just let him go."

DAVENEL hesitated. He did not shirk responsibility, but he did not like too much of it. He knew the fellows Joseph referred to. Men who risk their lives are notoriously casual about the lives of others. If the mysterious prowler were a spy, his disappearance would create investigation and trouble. If he were only a half-mad hobo, killing seemed somewhat harsh.

"We thought," Joseph went on, "that we might catch him and bring him around for you to question—"

Davenel rose from his chair impatiently.

"No! Suppose he is spying for the Germans and reported that he was brought here for questioning—do you suppose they wouldn't ask where I got the authority? Major Grieb, their guy at Morantain, was here a couple of days ago, asking me why I was called captain."

Davenel pointed at the telephone. "Some fool called me up, and forgot they have people listening in. I don't mind risking my life, but I don't want to be shot because of some dumb move. I've agreed to help you. But there is a limit."

"Oh, yes, Monsieur Philippe. But you see, we haven't had much education, and can't be smart. You don't want to question the guy?"

"I'm not going to substitute myself for the proper authorities. If the fellow trespasses on my land, I'll speak to him. Otherwise, nothing doing." Davenel checked himself, smiled. "Come, Joseph, you know that when it's possible, I help."

"Oh, yes, sure Monsieur Philippe. And it's your old man who'd be proud of you."

Left alone, Davenel paced the floor for some time, smoking. These peasants, his own kind, often infuriated him. They were in turn extremely wise and childish, heroic and timid.

Philippe Davenel, an average Frenchman, had been stunned by defeat, like the average Frenchman. On a splendid afternoon in June, 1940, his battery of field-artillery had been wiped out on a road by Stukas. Casual bits of bombs had struck his head, his chest, his thigh, and for some weeks afterward, his personal interest had been faint.

He had been but one of the more than one hundred thousand Frenchmen wounded in those few murderous weeks of the campaign. Better than one hundred and fifty thousand more had been killed. For over forty mad days, Frenchmen had fallen at the cadence of four to six thousand a day in a futile, almost ludicrous, effort to stop the avalanche. When the pain of his wounds left him respite for thinking, he had had, like many millions others, the sensation of living through a nightmare. He had gone home to convalesce, and found the Germans there.

His father had left Old Man Chrétien in charge of the large farm, and Philippe received half of the profits. As he had often returned for long leaves, he had made himself comfortable. There were two rooms furnished in modern style, a bedroom and a study. Huge windows had been knocked out of the walls to let in more light. Very soon after his return, the German commander at Morantain had called on him, with the usual propositions. Davenel, then still weak and shaken, had told the truth, that he did not feel equal to real work. And the French Army, save for a few thousand, had been disbanded. What did he intend to do?

Well, as he did not need to earn a living, he would write on a favorite theme of his, a study of ballistics before the use of explosives. He showed the Nazi major his books, his drawings, his collected figures, proving that the machines used by the Greek, the Roman and other ancient people, had been far more formidable than was believed today. The German, an artilleryman himself, had been amused and interested. And he had left to his successors the impression that Philippe Davenel, a graduate of Polytechnique School, was eccentric, harmless, probably a bit mad because of a serious head wound.

Davenel had likewise refused to join Pétain's National Legion. He was bewildered by the slavish imitation of all things German. For instance, the sight of French youths swinging stiffly, singing in chorus, always amused him. Scowls and guttural chants were not for a nation with a keen sense of humor. Before long, he heard that a few thousand Frenchmen had contrived to escape from the giant prison camp that was Europe. He heard of the BBC's broadcasts, of de Gaulle.

Several times he thought of making his way to England somehow. But it was the musing of a convalescent man, whose spirit had been as broken as his body. He felt old at thirty-six —old and defeated. The recriminations made his head ache. He had studied history, knew how many factors entered into the making of a national debacle. Forty million Frenchmen had been licked by eighty million Germans, a 1925-style army had succumbed before a 1940-style army twice as strong numerically. To blame this man or that man for not having produced a miracle on request was a bit thick.

LATE IN the summer of 1941, a delegation of farmers had called upon him. They reminded him that his father, Charles Davenel, had always been proud that he, an ordinary farmer, from plain people, had sacrificed much to educate a son to serve France. Charles Davenel, they said, must have been a prophet. Here he was, a graduate of Polytechnique School, a specialist in everything—strategy, engineering, explosives—and yet one of them, born and bred! Would he give them advice, show them how to do things?

Davenel knew very well that acceptance was probably the first step to an execution squad. But he knew that the farmers would never forgive nor forget a refusal. Moreover, resistance might not be useless. Germany had started war against Russia, so that garrisons were thinning, England was holding on very courageously, and the radio proclaimed every day that America would come in. Moreover, there was great need of organization. Random acts of violence served no general purpose; hostages died for them, twenty-to-one, and farmhouses were burned.

He agreed to help with advice. Naturally, inside a few days, he was deep in the business. He sheltered escaping flyers and prisoners, made bombs, even participated in short raids.

From time to time, hostages were shot at Morantain. Twice Davenel was taken to the

prison there, questioned. Even when released, he felt that he was suspected. But the Germans, in France at least, could not shoot all suspects, could not even keep them in jail. Once, after consulting his records, a German official smiled, and commented, "I see you have good friends." And Davenel thought of the first German officer he had met at the farm. Yes, these people recognized caste. An ex-captain of artillery was still a colleague.

Often the peasants would comment, "Ah, Monsieur Philippe, if your father could see you, he would be pleased."

These pious references to his father made him smile. He had loved and respected his father, had admired him in a way. But he knew very well that in sending him, Philippe, to schools, Charles Davenel had not intended to help France nor even wholly to give his son a fine career. Charles Davenel had made money, a good deal of money, farming, trading, investing. And he had been very proud of himself because of it, and resentful of his limitations.

At sixteen, Philippe had asked to enter into apprenticeship as a mechanic. At the time, he had had a crush on a local girl and wished to remain home. There had been a violent quarrel with his father, and Philippe's mother had taken him aside and explained matters: Philippe had to be an officer. The father had made up his mind, years ago.

On the same day, in the same church, two little boys had been baptized in Morantain: Philippe Davenel and Michel Ruguay de Bratteville. The Brattevilles owned a large estate, a mansion and a couple of farms, not fifteen kilometers from Davenel's farm. They were provincial nobility, and once had reigned as lords in the district.

While the Davenel party celebrated at the inn, handsome carriages drawn by superb horses had rolled under the windows, bells had tolled. One of the guests, probably inspired by the local wine, dry and potent, had gone to look out of the window, describing the distinguished gentlemen and ladies, the uniformed coachmen, and the baby seated like a prince on the lap of an English nurse. And he had commented with some sadness, "Some people are born lucky. Now, there's two kids, just alike, born the same week, and one will never be anything but a farmer, the other'll probably be an army officer, maybe a general. And there's nothing to do about it. That's fate."

"Is it?" the proud Charles Davenel had asked. "You never know."

So Philippe Davenel had been sent to the same schools as Michel Ruguay de Bratteville. When Michel had been sent to England for the summer, Philippe had gone to England. To Germany? Philippe went to Germany. Philippe, who had a gift for mathematics, won higher marks and honors than Michel, who was intelligent but did not like to work and did not need to. Father Davenel knew immense pride when his son beat out the "so-called nobleman."

For several years, the two boys were close friends, as they came from the same region, traveled to schools and home on vacations together. In the summer, they were inseparable, sleeping at random at the mansion or at the farm. It was an odd fact—and one which irritated Charles Davenel—that although Philippe surpassed Michel in his studies, won more distinction, outboxed and outwrestled him, beat him shooting, fencing, and running, it was the boy from the mansion who seemed to make the plans.

"Why don't you show him who's boss?" Davenel senior had asked.

"Why, father—he has to decide, see. His family has a lot of important guests and he has to take time when he can. With us, it makes no difference."

WHEN the boys reached Paris, things changed somewhat. Old Davenel's vanity conflicted with his common sense. His pride in having his son do as well as "the noble" did not extend to paying for dinners given for actresses in famous restaurants. Michel and Philippe were no longer inseparable, but they remained good friends. Philippe graduated near the head of their class, Michel managed to make the list.

Nevertheless, both were assigned as sub-lieutenants in the same artillery regiment at a garrison city in the East. Their lives were different. Even in uniforms, there are subtle details of dress, such as English riding-boots at two thousand francs the pair. Philippe spent his evenings studying, Michel seldom appeared at mess. Yet they become full lieutenants the same day. Then Michel obtained leave to get married. His bride was beautiful, his father-in-law was a famous man in business and politics. By some mysterious coincidence, soon after his marriage Michel Ruguay de Bratteville was given the post of aide to a military attaché in Europe. In three years, he was a captain.

Country people are not always kind. Charles Davenel had boasted a lot for years. They asked him how it happened that his son, so smart, remained a lieutenant so long. Davenel senior grumbled a good deal, reproaching his son with lacking confidence in himself, ambition, push. What did Philippe want? He, Davenel senior, could influence a deputy or two. That Michel, ah, there was a lad who knew how to swim!

Philippe Davenel had understood his father's disappointment, and he was sorry that the old man died feeling that he had wasted his money. Davenel often wondered what his father would

His battery of field-artillery had been wiped out by Stukas, and bits of bombs had struck his head, chest and thigh.

have said of his present activity. Perhaps, ambitious as he was, he would have urged his son to go over to the victors, to side with the powerful and rich. Yet that was not very probable: Davenel senior had been a true French peasant, intolerant of anything foreign, hating everything German.

In a way, death had spared the old man further rancor. For Michel Ruguay de Bratteville soon completely overshadowed Philippe Davenel's achievements. After a few years in the diplomatic service, he had resigned from the army to become his father-in-law's confidential secretary, which meant he would be his successor. On his summer visits to his country estate, Michel had brought famous guests, in parades of showy automobiles. Not that they impressed the local farm folks. Famous or not, foreign or not, rich or poor, grown women who ran around the fields half-naked were no better than they should be.

The war had put Michel back in uniform, as a major on the staff. After the armistice, his father-in-law made a swift shift to the winning side, and he followed dutifully. His name appeared often in the papers, as a collaborationist. He made speeches here, speeches there, praising the new order, Country, Family, Labor. He visited Germany with various commissions. He recruited against Russia. He had returned to the mansion twice, for the hunting season, and some of his guests had been German officers. The only open reproof had been given by an old woman, a cook fifty years with his family, who had quit, saying she preferred to feed pigs rather than Germans.

On the last occasion, he had dropped in to see Davenel. The farmer did not hate Michel, did not despise him. Michel was a nice chap, obliging, polite, generous, but trained to live at ease, to follow the line of least resistance. Davenel felt that if Michel had chanced to be in England, where "the right thing to do" was to go on fighting, he would have gone on fighting. As it was, he was under pressure from his family, his wife, his protector, lived among people to whom doing without power or luxury was unthinkable. And the Germans, ruthless and arrogant though they were, had people who knew how to win over such chaps as Michel with flattery, money.

"Drop this hermit's life," Michel had advised Davenel. "Come to Vichy with me. I assure you that if you see what is being done for France and Frenchmen, you will be proud. Discipline, order. The Germans are louts, of course, but they have the good grace to know that military victory isn't all of it."

"I guess I've gone back to my level. I'm just a farmer," Davenel said. "That's what I was meant to be."

"You're a much better engineer than I am,"

Michel insisted, meaning the compliment. "They won't ask you to direct war work. But there is money to be made, money that will— Ah, well, I see I'm getting nowhere." He looked at Davenel sharply. "You're not mixed up in any of this murderous business, are you?"

"Would the Boches let me stay if I were?"

"I have had inquiries about you, and gave you a good word—"

"I see. You're the good friends the Boches mentioned to me."

"Possibly. Perhaps I better tell you that they're smart, and know more than they let on. When they finish with Russia and have troops to use here, there'll be a thorough clean-up."

"I'm an ex-captain, just a farmer. I don't worry."

"There have been rumors about you."

"Oh, the Boches show you their confidential reports?"

"Not exactly. I had you taken off the hostage list twice. They consult me about this region, you understand. I vouched for you, and it would be embarrassing to me if it turned out—"

"I hope you won't be embarrassed."

"Oh, I'm safe enough." Michel smiled faintly. "But don't count on me to save you. There are limits to my influence. Any time you change your mind, get in touch with me."

"I'll be sure to."

MICHEL hesitated. "By the way, if you think I'm altogether a bad fellow, just remember that I was brought up around here."

"By English nurses, sure," Davenel grinned.

"And by you. Remember the 'raids' during vacations?" Michel smiled again. "If, for instance, I wanted to hide a fugitive, say a British flyer, I'd think right away of the Black Stones, or the Wolf's Leap. You can even remind your friends of that."

"Just in case, eh?" Davenel looked at his old comrade with open admiration.

"In case what?"

"In case some of the folks around here carry a grudge later." Davenel smiled in his turn, shrugged. "My father was right, you have a good head. The Boches *might* lose, eh?" He slapped Michel on the shoulder. "Understood, the first chance I get I'll tell the folks around here that you didn't work for the Boches in the region. I'm not kidding, it will mean something to them. And, for all I know, those spots may be used."

"Thanks. Keep out of trouble."

"I'm just a farmer."

After a copious lunch, Davenel lighted his pipe and lingered a while at the table. He took his meals with Old Man Chrétien and the farm hands. The conversation rolled on about the mysterious stranger, who was variously described as tall and dark, squat and red-haired, and as resembling a woman in disguise. Some claimed that there was something very odd about him, for dogs, instead of being hostile, whined when he was near.

"Probably a bum," Davenel said.

"No, Monsieur Philippe," one of the workmen said. "I've seen his tracks. He wears city shoes."

The local mystery completely overshadowed the campaign in Libya and American operations in the Pacific. When the men went back to work, Davenel went to his study. He pulled down a hinged plank to form a bench, brought sundry pieces of materials out of a drawer. He set to work completing a working model of a Greek or Roman ballista.

From time to time, and at this same bench, he turned his hand to more modern little machines, some of them made of metal, some of wood and rubber strands. He knew himself that the manufacture of infernal machines, incendiary devices, was an odd occupation for a Polytechnician, and often had the impression that he was playing at being a nihilist. Playing, yes—but the game might become dangerous.

The telephone rang. Davenel smiled grimly as he reached for it. Somewhere in Morantain at this exact second, a German, probably a sergeant-interpreter, flipped up a switch and got ready to take notes. Part of the new order was careful control of telephone conversations.

"Allo, Captain Davenel?"

"Retired," Davenel said wearily, for the benefit of the German. Military titles attracted attention.

"This is La Gousse, major-domo at the mansion, Captain. I was speaking to Joseph this morning and he told me that you might have room for a worker."

"See here, La Gousse, I—"

"What I mean is, a man came here, a poor chap who seems down on his luck. Proper papers, of course." This made Davenel smile—La Gousse was also aware of a listener. "He said he used to work for Monsieur Michel, and wanted his address. I told him you could employ him, perhaps, and almost surely tell him where to write to reach Monsieur Michel. I am calling because he looks a bit shabby, you know, and you might have had him turned out without seeing him. He left here just after lunch. Yes, I fed him. Should be at your place late in the afternoon, unless he picks up a ride."

"Thank you for calling, La Gousse. Everything all right at the mansion?"

"Everything, Monsieur Philippe."

Davenel hung up. La Gousse liked to call himself a major-domo, but was really a caretaker. Michel Ruguay de Bratteville ordinarily brought trained personal servants with him.

La Gousse, an old man, was a former poacher and still was reputed to know the forest and the mountains better than anyone else.

The former officer shrugged. These peasants were stubborn. Somehow, they had cornered the stranger and urged him to call on Davenel. And he had to admit that he felt a certain curiosity. He gave orders that the caller be admitted without delay and that the dogs should be tied up.

CHAPTER II

THE MAN FROM HELL

IT WAS after four when Suzon, Old Man Chrétien's young daughter who loved to play parlormaid for Monsieur Philippe, knocked at the door. "Monsieur, that man is here."

"Bring him in."

"Monsieur Philippe, he looks terrible. You don't want him in here." It was evident that the stranger had shocked the eighteen-year-old blonde in some way. "He's in rags, and how he talks!"

"Suzon, please! In here."

When the stranger appeared, Davenel understood what the girl had meant. He had never seen a man quite as unkempt, shabby and downright dirty, as this one—not even the professional beggars of Paris. The suit, one of the shoddy wartime products, had evidently been wet and dried several times; the trousers had shrunk, and the sleeves. The rags of linen were the hue of sacking. And the shoes made two unsightly muddy lumps on the rug.

The man had no hat, on his head or in his hand. His head was a shaggy mass of curly black hair; he had not shaved for days, his hair had not been cut for months. In that hirsute mask glowed fierce, feverish dark eyes. The exposed skin was weathered a dark brown. He would probably be close to five feet eleven inches when erect, Davenel estimated, but whether from humility or fatigue, he stooped in almost a crouch.

"Good day," he said, hoarsely.

"Good day," Davenel replied, dismissing the reluctant Suzon with a gesture. "I understand you want employment?"

"I want to see Lieutenant Ruguay."

"You mean Major Ruguay de Bratteville?"

"He's a major, is he?" The man lifted a dirty hand in a mock military salute. "All right. Major Ruguay, et cetera."

Whereupon he laughed, and it was the oddest laugh that Davenel had ever heard. The mouth remained closed; he laughed without smiling, like a ventriloquist. But it was amusement of a sort; his whole body shook with it, and Davenel realized suddenly with a shock that the fellow was on the verge of hysteria.

"You're quite tired. Bring up a chair and sit down."

"Tired? I'm never tired. Well, are you going to give me the brush-off like that peasant flunkey at the house—"

"You wish to find Major Ruguay de—"

"De Bratteville, yes. You know damn well who. Yes, I've been looking for him for more than twelve years. But we did not live in the same country. Not even in the same climate. Oh, no!" The man laughed again. He locked his hands behind his back and started to shuffle about the study, stopping to look at ornaments and pictures, with a casual, infuriating insolence. He spoke now like a well-bred gentleman on a visit. "You see, *monsieur*, I merely want to ask him a few questions. You would not think it would be so difficult, would you? So if you could inform me—"

"You read the newspapers, don't you?"

"Oh, yes. I know about his official tours. But he is under guard—there are gendarmes and Boche cops, too. You see, *monsieur*, I must speak with him privately. I thought he would come here for the summer. So I came and waited."

"You are the man who's been lurking in the forest?"

"Yes. Nine days, nine days. I lost patience when he didn't come and went to ask."

"What do you wish? Could I help you?"

"You? Stop kidding. He's the only one who knows."

"Suppose you sit down, my friend, and talk sensibly?"

"I am not tired, and I am not your friend." The ragged man stiffened. "Don't use that tone to me, don't 'my friend' me, do you hear? You have dough and a farm, but I am as good a man as you, hear? I came here to get an address. Can't you give it to me without so much talk?"

"My friend," Davenel said, "you can go to the devil."

"Oh, no. The devil? That's where I came from."

"The only address I can give you is care of the Ministry in Vichy and you must know that—"

"Vichy swarms with cops, all kinds and all colors of cops." The tramp stared at Davenel. "Say, I've seen you somewhere. Are you a cop?"

"You'll either talk sensibly," Davenel snapped, rising, "or get out at once."

"Suppose I won't until you tell me what I want to know—"

"I'll report you to the police, my good man."

"My good man, my good man—I've been demoted." The man pretended to wipe his eyes, resumed his stroll along the walls, came to a stop before a large photograph, said over his shoulder, "Call the cops, call in the

"Lots of things to see in those woods," said the tramp. "Have the Boches pinch me and I'll talk."

Boches. They all want me. But I lived in the woods, eating fruit and drinking brook water—back to nature, just a little Jean-Jacques Rousseau—all for one little interview with Lieutenant—beg pardon, *Major* Ruguay plus. Lots of things to see in those woods. Nice goings-on. Guys with guns. Things hidden. Have the Boches pinch me, and I'll talk to them."

"I wouldn't talk about that, fellow."

"So, you're in with them? Partisans. Oh, I've seen lots of them. I walked across France without once using a train or a bus, cross-country. Scared the guts out of a lot of people, I did." He continued to stare at the photograph, then laid a finger on the glass pane. "You see that? That's me. Sure, it's me. I must be dreaming, dreaming I'm looking at myself in a photograph . . ."

Davenel came nearer, took a look. "Nonsense, nonsense."

"And what do you mean, nonsense?"

"That's a picture of my battery, taken thirteen years ago."

"So what?"

"So I know everybody in it. You're not there."

"The hell I'm not! Right here—"

The tramp pushed his index finger against the glass again, almost knocking the picture from the wall. Davenel grew impatient and drew him away.

"Keep your hands off. It isn't you—"

"Think I'm afraid of you?"

THE man showed his teeth, his fist shot out and caught Davenel on the jaw. To his surprise, he found himself seated, with bells tinkling in space. That lean chap must be all muscle to have that kind of a punch. He scrambled erect, struck two or three times, true and hard—and looked for the wreck to collapse. He was disappointed. The other kept his feet and attacked again.

When they clinched, this half-starved tramp lifted Davenel, a good thirty pounds heavier, and tossed him away. Davenel struck again, again. He was struck back as hard. It was foolish, but he felt like calling for help. Unless he wanted his furnishings torn and broken—and perhaps a hard blow on his skull might mean permanent injury.

But he hesitated. Country people are peculiar. They liked him, but if he called out, they would feel amusement that the boss had been bested by a ragged tramp smaller than himself. He caught the other's head under one arm, pounded the bearded jaw. The tramp pulled himself free, staggered a second, laughed, and rushed forward again.

Fortunately, the door opened and two farm-hands rushed in, followed by Suzon, who held a mattock-handle in both hands. While the men caught the fellow by the arms, Suzon brought down the ashwood heartily. The man collapsed then, hung from the hands of his captors. There was a pause, as the winners stared at each other, panting, foolish.

"Do we call the gendarmes?" asked someone.

"No. He's been in the forest, Saw things. Watch him."

"We'll watch him."

"I'll clean up a bit, then talk to him again." Davenel motioned them away. He washed his hands, and Suzon brought various salves and bottles. She insisted on smearing a few scratches on his wrists and neck with iodine. Her touch was very gentle; she was very concerned. And certain thoughts that Davenel had held at times, dismissed because of his age, returned.

"I told Monsieur Philippe to be careful," she said. "But no. Oh, men are so stubborn! He might have killed you, shot you—"

"Nothing as bad as that, Suzon." Davenel winced a bit at her touch on his bruised jaw. "I think I know now what ails the poor fellow.

He's been awfully afraid, for days, without being able to do anything about it. It was good for him to find something tangible to strike."

"You're so good, Monsieur Philippe."

"I? Nonsense! You—you may go now, Suzon."

She gathered the stuff, looked at him a second, left.

"Ah, well, we'll see, we'll see, he sighed.

He noticed that the photograph was still hanging askew, went to it, straightening a chair or two as he passed. He adjusted the frame, then noticed a smear on the glass, revealed by the slanting sun. Mechanically, he wiped at it with a handkerchief. With the result that a light film of dust, until then unnoticeable, cleared up in one place and framed a single face. Davenel looked closer: The man was a gunner-corporal, a tall, handsome, intelligent-looking chap. Very young, as most peacetime soldiers were, probably twenty-one or two.

As often happens in such cases, Davenel could remember two score of names, match them to faces—an officer always remembers the members of his first unit—but that of the corporal escaped him. Yet he felt that there was some important reason why he should remember. Various details about the corporal drifted into his mind; he remembered speaking to him in the repair-shop, seeing him on the caisson.

"In Michel's group—" he mused, located his ex-friend, with the fine boots showing to advantage even in the photo. "Eh—in Michel's group. And he is looking for Michel. Maybe—maybe—Oh-oh! I remember why there's something special—he used to handle a pencil well, decorated the menus and the dance programs for us. Sacred thunder! Girbal, it's Corporal Girbal! *Le Roi des Poires*, the king of dupes, the super-sucker!

"But he went to Guiana, to Devil's Island. Sacred thunder! Devil's Island. He said, 'The Devil? That's where I came from.' He's escaped. Well, well." Davenel looked at the telephone. The gendarmes would be here inside three hours if he warned them. An escaped convict—

Suzon knocked on the door, entered. She handed Davenel a sodden, worn booklet. "The lads found this on him."

It was a French card of identity, stamped with many changes of residence, several of them visaed by the German military authorities. The name was Dursus, Emile-Paul, born August 26th, 1908, at Saint-Porchaire, Department of Charente-Inférieure, a mechanic by trade. The inserts showed that he had been employed in various factories, one of them in Belgium. He had served with the Sixth Battalion of Engineers, had been discharged on July 10th, 1940. His height was one meter and seventy-seven centimeters, had dark hair, dark eyes, other features were medium, normal.

Davenel was not surprised. He knew that anyone with a little acquaintance with the underworld before the war could purchase false papers. And since the war, honest people had often been forced to resort to the traffic.

"He wants to see you, Monsieur Philippe."

"All right."

The tramp entered between the two farmhands.

"I want to offer apologies," he said, in a calm voice. "I don't know what happened to me. You were ready to be kind. But I had had my first hot meal in a couple of weeks at that big house, and I felt sort of strong and drunk on food, even after four hours. You don't know how it is, *monsieur*. I'll go without more trouble. And you needn't worry about my talking out of turn. That knock on the bean—you can hit, *mademoiselle*—sort of cleared my head."

"No grudge," Davenel nodded. "I'd suggest, as long as you are here, that you take a bath, shave, and get a square meal. After that, we can talk again. You've been having a rather rough time."

"You're telling me!"

AS HE turned to go, Davenel made a sign to the others: Keep him under guard. He was not deceived by Dursus' fine words, knew how well that type of man could pretend meekness, obedience, sincerity. In normal times, it would have been so simple to turn him over to the police. It was not simple now.

On one of his shelves, Davenel had a complete collection of an illustrated magazine, in bound volumes, stretching from 1920 to the present. He took down the 1929 tomes, and in a very short time he located the Girbal case. There were many photographs, following the man from his arrest to his departure from France. The first photo showed him in the uniform of an artillery corporal, smiling defiantly between two very grim gendarmes. The last, a long-range shot, showed him as a huddled form, wearing convict garb, in a crowd of condemned men aboard a lighter, heading for the ship that was to take them to Guiana. He had been the important chap, the star, and was indicated by a white cross.

Corporal Girbal had had a good family background, according to the reports. His father was a government postal employee. Relatively well educated, he had been a locksmith, and taking courses in ornamental metal-decorating when called to the army. In seven months he had become a corporal.

For the rest, his story was extremely banal, almost biblical in its simplicity. During his hours of liberty, Louis Girbal had frequented a small bar, where he had met Germaine Joli-

bon. From then on, he had plagued his father with demands for small loans—fifty, a hundred francs. An anonymous letter to the police had brought about his arrest. The girl had admitted that he had given her a piece of machinery and some drawings to sell to a man she knew. She said, and he admitted, that she had paid him two hundred francs.

When first questioned, he had admitted everything. He had given Germaine the piece of machinery, nothing more than a flashscreen for an automatic rifle, which, he pointed out, was in the hands of four hundred thousand men, hence probably no secret to the Germans. The drawings he had copied from a manual for the use of artillery noncommissioned officers, which anyone could purchase in any bookshop for seven francs fifty centimes. He had acted, he insisted, to trap the spy using Germaine. And as he had expected, the man had made an appointment with him, to threaten him with exposure for selling the first items as a means to obtain something of real value.

He declared that he had told one of his officers about it when on his way to meet the spy. Unfortunately, the officer he named, whose identity was not revealed to the public, denied having seen the corporal at any time that day. The contention of the prosecution was that there had been "the will to treason," that Girbal, a clever fellow by his own admission and quite able to construct a story, had planted the two worthless items to clear himself in case anything went wrong. What he had sold or not sold to the fellow who had fled, no one knew. An example was needed.

The trial itself had been held secret, because of details involving the national defense. Rumor had it that the prosecution had had other proof of guilt. Germaine had got off with six months in prison. Girbal had been sentenced to military degradation and twenty years of "seclusion"—which meant life in Guiana, as any sentence more than eight years in length determined perpetual residence in the penal colony.

A Paris reporter had given the affair its catch-line. Contrasting the rigorous sentence with the two hundred francs (eight dollars), the only money proved to have been collected by Girbal, he called him *le roi des poires*, the king of suckers.

Like everyone else in the regiment, Davenel had felt sorry for Girbal and believed in his guilt. Girbal was a good-looking young fellow, believed himself a ladies' man, and his talent for drawing had won him many small favors from officers. He had been in trouble once before, for writing a love-note to a captain's wife, and obviously had aspired beyond his chevrons.

While the officer he had named as his confidential adviser had never been named, Davenel dismissed the possibility of Michel Ruguay immediately. He had been in the clear, as he had been on duty at the barracks. There had been some speculation as to whom Girbal had chosen, and possibilities had been discussed.

Poor fool! Davenel remembered his degradation, the gloomy parade before the assembled regiment. He had looked guilty enough then, trying to keep his smile, his eyes shifting along the lines of faces, looking for a friend, an answering smile.

What did he want from Michel? Money, obviously. Michel had been the richest, and he admitted also, the most generous of the officers. He closed the book, went back to his work. It was dusk when Suzon knocked on the door.

"He wants to see you, Monsieur Philippe." She smiled. "Funny how clothing changes a man. I gave him one of Amédée's old suits—" Her voice faltered; her brother was in a German prison camp. "He—he looks real nice." She giggled. "And can he talk!"

"I'll see him."

Dursus came in, and Davenel was startled by the change in his appearance. The brown suit fitted him very well, he seemed at ease. He wore shoes with a high polish on the toes, a clean shirt and a colorful tie. Davenel knew him to be somewhat over thirty, but he looked twenty-six or seven. If this was what Devil's Island and a fugitive's existence did to a man—

His very black curly hair, without a touch of gray, was parted neatly. His face was lean, with regular features, and closely shaved, had a bluish sheen. He smiled like a dental advertisement, his teeth glittering against the tan. He joined his heels, gave a sketchy, humorous military salute. "At your orders, *monsieur*."

"You look better."

"I feel better. Dursus, Emile-Paul, mechanic." He smiled. "I wish to thank you. I ask permission to sleep somewhere tonight, and I'll be off in the morning."

"You said you had seen me before," Davenel said gently. "Are you still under that impression?"

THE man changed subtly. He did not move, yet there was now a sense of tightness, of watchfulness. "Yes. You're Lieutenant Davenel—First Section." He lifted his shoulders slightly. "Some people can make damn fools of themselves and get away with it. Not me." His hard chin jerked toward the wall and the photograph. "That tipped you off, eh?"

"Yes."

"I should have remembered that your father farmed for Ruguay's family." Dursus yielded to a bitter grin.

"Not quite correct. We are neighbors, that's all."

"Well, that's what everybody thought, you know." His insolence was more marked. "I hope I didn't hurt your feelings?"

"Not enough for me to kick you out, as you intended me to," Davenel replied. "You know I can turn you over to the police as an escaped convict, don't you?"

"You cannot."

"What's to stop me?"

"Two things, my friend." Dursus laughed silently. "First, you are up to your neck in things, and I can talk. Second, I am not an escaped convict."

"You're Louis Girbal."

"Yes. However, I am free legally." He eyed Davenel mockingly. "I served ten years and four months, plus two days—one remembers those figures—on The Devil. Then there was a war. You may recall how it turned out. There was an armistice. Well, my friend, one of the clauses of that wonderful document was that persons serving sentences for espionage for Germany should be set at liberty at once. So, you see, I'm not an escaped convict. Merely a former convict. Less glorious, but safer."

"Why do you hide?" Davenel challenged.

"Because I have no permit to travel. And because the Germans want me for questioning. I was working in a plant, there was sabotage, and our fingerprints were taken. I was using false papers, so I scrammed."

"Did you have anything to do with sabotage?"

"Me?" Dursus shrugged again. "I see what you mean, and I could win a little kindness with a lie. Well, I am the king of dupes, that's true, yet not dupe enough to risk my neck for a country that shipped me to hell. Who did me a good turn, France or Germany? So? Maybe you'll say it's a class war. To that, I say nuts. France, Germany, China, America, Russia, it's all the same. Just different systems of kidding the public. A few guys live off the fat of the land, grab the best-looking janes, and millions of saps work to support them. No, there's no justice."

"You committed a dirty crime to start with, Girbal—"

"Did I? A court martial said I did. If those same officers told you that the proper way to milk a cow is to use her tail like a pump-handle, you'd think they were right? And I'll bet they know more about farming than about spying and law. I'm not a spy, and I never was. I was a sucker, sure. I was twenty-two." Dursus put his hands out. "Look at them. I've worked for a living. Couldn't I have made dirty money? At Panama, I had an offer to come back de luxe to France, to be in their police. I refused, and stuck to three other lads, real fugitives those. . . Give me one of those cigarettes—I smoke, too. Thanks.

"So what happens? I ship to Martinique with them, on a leaky tub. Fine. Have I got the sense to stay there? No. I make Dakar, working my way in the engine room. A hell of a trip, too. Old boat, cockroaches and such. Your heart in your mouth all the time, German submarines, British cruisers, wondering which would get you first. In Dakar, I make arrangements to hop it with the others—crazy idea—to join de Gaulle, the Free French. Coastal boat to the Congo. I pay my share and more."

Dursus gestured, puffing out smoke.

"So what? So my pals—one's a murderer, the other two thieves—they get finicky. They say they don't want to hurt my feelings, but after all, I was in for spying, and they'll have to do their duty and report it, so the Gaullists won't want me! Serious, you know, like little white virgins! I ask an officer who was going off, too—tell him who I am. He says he's sorry, but it's no use. I'm a spy, a traitor. I'm not wanted even to carry a gun.

"So I make it to France. Spanish ship to Cadiz. I'm going home to see the folks. They haven't written, but I know they're alive. Well, I manage to get a card of identity, work my way—took two months. My mother's home—so are the Germans. She recognizes me, and at first hugs and kisses me. Then she says something like she's glad I called, but will I scram before father pops in for lunch and sees me. He'd kill me, she says, because of the shame. He's burned up every photo of me as a kid. I'm dead—a traitor. Then she yaps at me about the woman and why didn't I write her, if father held out on dough? She says to kind of hide my face going out of the house, that people seem to have forgotten, but will talk again if I'm seen. My mother!"

"Tough," Davenel admitted. "But what else could she do—"

"But, damn it all, suppose they do think I sold out to the Germans? What about other people? What about the rich, the powerful, who run around and lick their feet? Some of the guys went to Germany to work. Some are working for the Germans right in town. My old man's best friend is a foreman in a place that makes parts for tanks, gadgets—you know. And the cops, the mayors, the prefects, Pétain, Laval, Darlan, the whole lot of them? Frenchmen, gentlemen, nobody makes a crack. And all the dirty guys who write for the papers for German money—and the dames—"

"All of that will be settled, Girbal."

"Don't make me laugh!" The man gestured wearily. "There are too many of them. If the Germans ever leave, they'll spread their arms wide and whine, 'What could I do? I had to live, I had to eat.' That's what gets my goat. I'm treated like a leper by worse lepers than I am. If I tell anyone I am Girbal, what happens? They won't even listen, hear my side of it. God, I've felt like going to the Boches at times and saying, 'Put me in your secret police, I've had experience!' "

DAVENEL looked at him curiously. "You never did that, did you?"

"No. Oh, it's not what you think, not patriotism. It's not that I love France or the French. But I've known the Germans—we had a few on the Island. They'll doublecross you every time. They have lots of guts when things go well, squeal and cave in when they don't. They'll sell you out for small privileges, for cigarettes—It'll give you a laugh—even the traitors hated them, because even traitors can't trust them."

"Take another cigarette." Davenel smiled. "Must be a pretty mixed crowd on the Island. What about this innocence of yours? Have you anything to back your talk?"

"Lieutenant Ruguay—Major, of course—he knows. I went to him that night and told him where I was going and what for—yes, he was the guy. And when they confronted me with him and I reminded him, you know what he did? He called me a liar, and he said that if his name was dragged into the investigation, someone's ears would burn. I tried to tell my lawyer, but he told me to drop that line, that an officer, a gentleman, would not lie under oath. I said he hadn't been sworn, and the lawyer said he had given his word, the same thing. He told me I'd get off with three years if I was a nice boy and didn't try to drag an officer in on it—that always made other officers sore. He asked me why the lieutenant would lie, and I said because I had seen him at a place he kept in town to meet janes, when he should have been on duty at the barracks. It was his day on. But I knew where to find him. The lawyer checked with the barracks, and the lieutenant had been there all evening, all night, he said. Moreover, no one would believe a lieutenant would lie and send an innocent man to Guiana just to hide a thing like being away from post—which would have meant maybe a stiff reprimand and a few days' open arrest, what with his pull and popularity with the colonel and it being peacetime and all. So the lawyer wouldn't mention it in court, and when I was asked if I had anything to say and tried to talk, the president of the court told me that angle had been investigated, reports were in the files, and that he and his colleagues would pass on the probable veracity of my statement. He said not to make my case worse by dragging in an honored name. And the guards pushed me back to the bench."

Davenel remained thoughtful for a minute. Dursus-Girbal's voice rang with truth. Yet he could not believe that Michel would have lied to cover something that was done so often. Many officers, bored with the garrison routine, would turn things over to a trusted sergeant and go for a stroll. Certainly, the discovery would not have jeopardized his career.

"Why would the lieutenant lie?" he asked.

"Ah, there we have it." The man laughed louder. "You know, I didn't get it for years. I wondered what he had against me. But when I got to this place there was a dame there, and a good-looking one, too. I knocked on his door, and I heard him say, 'Here's the caterer now,' and he opened the door wide. He was so surprised to see me he let me in. Probably thought something had gone wrong at the barracks and he was wanted.

"I asked to speak to him privately. He said it was all right. That I could talk, but to hurry. So I told him, very short like. I was proud of myself and excited—just a kid—and she poured a glass of something and brought it to me. She said, 'Don't be so nervous. Your lieutenant won't eat you while I'm here.' It was sort of greenish, sticky, sweet stuff. She didn't seem to mind my seeing her there, but he sure was nervous, as I remember. He was hurrying me, I was sort of mixing my words, and she kept kidding. Nice soft voice, like an actress. I don't think she understood what I was speaking about."

"And what makes you think—" Davenel prompted.

"When I got more savvy about women, I realized something: If the lieutenant had admitted that I had been there, she could have used me to prove she'd been there, too."

"If she was as beautiful as you claim, Michel would never have denied it." Davenel laughed at the thought. "In those days, his reputation was beyond damage. No, it doesn't make sense—" He stopped in surprise. "Do you know, I'm almost convinced you were there. And if you were—of course—"

"I was," Dursus straightened, spoke earnestly. "Word of honor, I was." Then his shoulders sagged, his lips twisted in self-derision. "And that's a twenty-four-carat guarantee, isn't it?"

Davenel was puzzled. The story was bolstered by certain details; he remembered some reticences of Michel. But he had commanded men too long not to know how many plausible details a good liar could invent. Nevertheless, he felt that Dursus could have obtained espionage work from the German secret police in France. Had he? Was he now engaged on a mission? The wisest course, at present, was to keep him around a while, to watch him. And if he had been a fool instead of a traitor, he had suffered enough. He held out his hand to the man.

"I believe you." He turned away after shaking hands. "Grab that chair, sit down. Right. I'll get in touch with somebody in town to bring your card up to date. You may keep the same name, but the trade will be changed from mechanic to farm laborer, so they won't draft you for the factories. You can work here. That doesn't imply that you have to join us at anything else—"

"I'd like to do like the rest, if you'll have me."

"We'll see. Meanwhile, keep your real identity to yourself. I couldn't explain to our chaps just why I believe you. I want you to remember one thing: Don't do anything about Michel Ruguay without telling me. It would be no use at present. He is in solid with the Boches. Later, things will be different, for you and against him. From time to time"—Davenel indicated the shelf—"look through those magazines. See if you can locate the woman you saw. From your description, she may have been someone whose picture would be printed. Now, as to wages—"

He discussed the necessary details at length. He had an idea who the woman might have been. But he knew better than to show a photo to Dursus and ask. Dursus would have agreed, the more readily if he had lied.

CHAPTER III

THE MAN FROM HEAVEN

IN the main room of the farm, Dursus was singing a light-hearted peasant song. For almost two years now, the ex-convict had lived in Davenel's establishment. He was accepted by all, and very popular. On occasion, Davenel wondered what the peasants would say should they be told that the man was a convicted traitor who had "pulled" more than ten years on The Devil.

For several hours, Davenel had known something which must be told, something which would dispel Dursus' confidence, probably end his stay in the region. From information received by radio, the nature of certain instructions, the American and British armies would be landing in northern France, perhaps had already landed. All partisan groups were ordered to be ready, on the alert; organized detachments were to be armed from hidden stores.

Within limits, that would be some sort of a finish for Dursus. Davenel feared he would take it hard. Some months after his arrival, during a brief visit made to the mansion by Major Ruguay de Bratteville, Davenel had called the ex-convict into his study.

"Don't do anything rash, Emile."

"Never fear, Monsieur Philippe." Dursus smiled. "I don't want things to change. I can wait, I can wait. I've never been a happy man before." He spoke in a low voice. "There are times, like the other night when we blew up the bridge, when I almost wish a bullet would hit me. So I'd die quickly, without knowing it, without them ever knowing."

Davenel understood what he meant: He had become a local personage. To start with, he was phenomenally strong, could toss husky farmers about easily. He told Davenel that he had learned the tricks from an Austrian strong man on The Island, with plenty of time to practice and train. He could twist horseshoes, break stones and coins. He could also draw caricatures, and he could sing. When he joined the partisans on expeditions, he proved as brave, as enduring, as smart, as anyone. Old Man Chrétien claimed that he could mend anything, from a rake-handle to a clock.

"They need never know, Emile."

"Why kid me? When the war's over, things will straighten out. They know I'm under a false card. They'll ask who I am, the cops will get nosey. And then it will be the same. My own mother couldn't stomach me around." He clenched his hands. "So I can't let myself go, feel the way other men feel about anything, about anyone."

He was right. The people who had adjusted his identity at Morantain, with the bought complicity of the German police, had done a good job. But some of the French gendarmes who had lived in the region many years knew that he was not related to local people. While the Germans were there, they remained, as they put it, "neutral," but once the situation was cleared, they would ask questions.

Old Man Chrétien, Davenel's manager, came in. He was somewhat embarrassed in the study, as usual. He took a while to locate a chair, light his pipe.

"And so, Monsieur Philippe, the Americans are in Normandy?"

"Where did you hear that?"

"It's all over Morantain. It'll be in the papers tomorrow." The old man shrugged. "Not that I want to complain, but I'm glad of it. My boy'll come home." He paused thoughtfully for a while. "Monsieur Philippe, I've been wanting to talk to you for some time. How long have you known Emile?"

"Emile Dursus?"

"Yes, Dursus."

"Is anything wrong?"

"Wrong, I wouldn't say." Chrétien hesitated. "Right, I don't know."

"Well—" Davenel did not like to lie needlessly. "Well, I'd say sixteen years or so."

"There's nothing against him, is there? Oh, I know he's under false papers. But it's just war business?"

Davenel tapped his desk absentmindedly.

"Father Chrétien, if you'd tell me what's on your mind, I could answer you better. A man may be all right for one thing, not for another."

"Well, with the Americans coming and the war finishing, a man has got to think of the future again." Chrétian nodded to himself. "My youngest's quite gone on the fellow and wants to marry him."

"Suzon?" Davenel exclaimed.

"Yes. She's my youngest."

"Why, he's sixteen years older than she is!"

"That," the old farmer commented with a sly smile, "is something for him to worry about. Oh, he's a nice chap, learned a lot about farming, and can do anything he wants with his hands. I don't mind much if he hasn't a sou in the world. But we don't know a thing about his family, not even his real name. She came to me and said he loved her but didn't think he was good enough for her so he didn't dare ask me. Now that ain't usual, a man thinking like that, unless there's something."

Davenel was startled to find himself burning with indignation. He had liked the girl very much, and there had been a time when anyone but a fool would have known she felt more than indifference for him. He had given the matter serious thought, had hesitated because of his age, and now a man almost as old—within a year of his age—with nothing in the world to offer, without a franc saved, had come along and won her because he had no scruples.

"Suppose I talk to him, Father Chrétien—"

"So there's something?"

"I don't know. I'm not quite sure."

"I hope there isn't." The old chap lifted his hands. "I've an idea—well, you know, when a girl talks in a certain way—"

"Why—I—" Davenel's face grew red. But the telephone rang and he picked up the instrument. "Allo! . . . Philippe Davenel speaking."

"This is La Gousse, the major-domo, *monsieur*. Major Ruguay de Bratteville has just phoned me from Dijon that he will be here tonight. With a guest. As you are an old friend, I thought I'd inform you."

"THANK YOU, La Gousse." Davenel hung up, turned to Chrétien. "Look here, everything may be all right. Send Emile in. . . And you'd better have somebody go over to the Bratteville farms and move those two chaps we have there. La Gousse just notified me his boss is coming."

"We'll tend to it, Monsieur Philippe. By the way, don't bawl Emile out. He hasn't said anything. It's all my kid."

"Don't worry." Davenel paced restlessly. He had a duty to Chrétien, a partner in business, an old friend of his family. He could not let the girl marry an ex-convict without trying to prevent it. What annoyed him most was that he had a sense of personal irritation, almost of anger against the two. Then Dursus stood there inside the door, looking cool, lithe, absurdly young with his flashing smile and his curly black hair. "Well, Dursus, you certainly know how to complicate matters."

"Me, Monsieur Philippe?"

"What's this about your—your marrying Suzon?"

"I'd like to, if it was possible." Dursus shrugged. "But for a marriage, you have to prove identity. I told her that—not quite in so many words, but I said that I wasn't good enough, had no job, really, no money." The truth dawned on him. "Oh, she's talked to the old man!"

"What's been going on?"

"Just a moment." Dursus' face took on an expression that Davenel had not seen for two years. "Who wants to know, you or her father? If so, why doesn't he ask me? And why do you ask me?"

"That's an odd pose to take with me, Girbal."

"So now it's Girbal? I see! For two years I work, I risk my neck like anybody else, but I'm still no good. Not good enough for you, not good enough for any girl." He turned to the door, but Davenel had slid against it, arms folded. "All right. If you want to try it sometime when I'm fed, like now—"

"Listen to me," Davenel said. "Her father asked me if there was any reason to turn you down. All right, I promise you to tell him exactly what you want me to. I owe it to you, we all owe it to you. There are several guys alive around here who'd have died but for you—"

"As far as that goes," Dursus admitted, "I can say the same—I wouldn't be here if my pals had quit on me." He hesitated. "I see what a fix you're in. No, you can't tell him I'm all right. About the other thing, Monsieur Philippe, there's nothing wrong, I swear it. See, I loved her like a kid, at first. Then it got different, but not so much. She—well, she thinks I'm a wonderful guy."

And to Davenel's complete stupefaction, the tough Dursus wept, tears rolling down his tanned cheeks.

"I ought to have run off, you know. But where to?"

Davenel's feelings had shifted from indignation to understanding, then to pity.

"Listen, Ruguay's coming here today—"

"Oh, that." Dursus shook his head. "What's the use? He'll say no again. I was half-crazy when I came here. I thought all I had to do was to scare him. Or kill him, if he didn't own up. You'd need legal papers for my rehabilitation. It's like stuff in a book. Like the deathbed confessions you hear about, that free a convict after twenty years—"

"It's happened."

"Yes, I've heard of a couple of cases, out there. But it's like winning a million francs at the lottery. It happens to some people, but never to you. I'm not going to see him. I'd kill him, and then I'd be a murderer. As soon as it's possible, I'll beat it, joint the army as Dursus and try to forget about here—and about her. See, any move I make would smear her up and maybe ruin her chances with—somebody else. There'll be an army for me to join soon. And if I'm found out, what the hell—"

He ceased speaking, for Suzon had come in without knocking.

Something had happened to her chin. Davenel recalled it as rounded and soft; now it was pushed out, small and hard. "Emile," she said, "when the war is over, you write me. I'll come. Monsieur Philippe, I thought you were our friend, and now you've set my father against us! Oh, don't deny it. He said you had told him to wait. Why? I don't know why my father even consults you. You're the owner of the farm, but we're not your slaves!"

"Suzon, you—"

"And you're putting foolishness in Emile's head. Because he is smarter and handsomer than you are, you're—"

Dursus lifted his hand. "Suzon."

"All right, Emile. But they get on my nerves."

Dursus pulled out a battered cigarette, lighted it. "You were rude to Monsieur Philippe. He is perfectly right. He knows that I have been a convict, do you hear, a convict—"

"You didn't do it."

"Do what?"

"What they said you did."

Dursus shot a glance, at once proud and humble, toward Davenel, as if to say, "What can you do with her?" And, despite the seriousness of the situation, Davenel smiled.

"And you don't need to laugh. A woman knows the man she loves. Emile never did anything to be ashamed of. Never!"

"I was convicted of treason. My real name's Girbal."

The name manifestly meant nothing to her. She had been six or seven when Corporal Girbal had been tried.

"I don't believe it," she said. Dursus shrugged, located the volume of the magazine, turned to a page, laid his finger on his photograph. She looked at the page, and her eyes leaped to another photograph. "Who's that woman?"

"I was mixed up with her. She caused the whole thing."

"Were you in love with her?"

"I don't think so. I was young." Dursus nodded. "Like you now."

SUZON looked at the pages, turning them slowly. She seemed doubtful and dazed. She turned to Davenel.

"Monsieur Philippe, please help us."

"How, my child?"

"Some way, I don't know. You're educated, you were an officer, they'll listen to what you say. If Emile says he didn't do it, he didn't. You don't know what a good man he is. Always talking me down, sensible like, and saying I'm young and not to rush things. If he was bad, I'd be bad."

"Monsieur Philippe's not interested in all that." Dursus took her shoulder in his hands. "You know I love you, Suzon, and that I'll do all I can. Leave us, now, and tell him you're sorry—"

"It's all right, all right," Davenel murmured gruffly.

Suzon stepped closer, suddenly stood on tiptoes and kissed his cheek. "There." Then she ran out of the room, closed the door. The two men looked at each other for some time in silence, before Davenel spoke.

"I see why it's tough. Happens to a guy once in a lifetime."

"I know it. So you see, if I made a mess of things around her, like with Ruguay, and they arrested me, nobody could keep her from mixing in and making a fool of herself. So it's as I say. I'll kid her along a while longer, and vanish at the first chance. Best for her. She'll get over it." Dursus smiled sadly. "Perhaps I will, too."

Meanwhile, news had reached the farm: The Germans at Morantain had proclaimed a state of siege. A placard before the Town Hall stated that acts of a disorderly nature, threatening public peace or interfering with the forces of occupation, would be punished with utmost speed and severity. Anyone harboring a foreigner, an emissary, a parachutist, would be shot. Patrols had gone through the town, gleaning fifty more hostages. There had been some violence already. Radio sets had been discovered, persons arrested, three shot.

The six o'clock radio broadcast from Britain still advised all partisan groups to act only on orders. But those orders were coming through. Some were for the region. Davenel attended to preparations.

At dusk, a large German patrol, more than twenty men, came along the road. The men were crowded in a single truck, not even armored. Two officers and the noncoms were Germans, most of the men were recruited from remote occupied countries. When Davenel recalled the equipment and efficiency of patrols even in late 1943, he was cheered by the change.

At seven forty-five, fifteen minutes before the service was due to be cut off for the night, Davenel's telephone rang.

"Philippe? This is Michel. Just reached here. I want you to come over and see me tonight."

"My dear fellow, it's a good fifteen kilometers! I have no car available. And you'll understand that I don't care to be riding on the roads tonight, or walking, without a special permit."

"Look here, I am half-dead, old man. I have been driving since three in the morning. Not so far, but stopped for identification every few hundred meters. No, no, the invasion doesn't mean very much. The possibility of

landing troops was always conceded. The Germans will shove them into the Channel in another few hours. But I really must see you."

"Sorry, can't risk it."

"Will you be at home?"

"Where the devil could I go?"

"Of course, of course. I'll drive over."

"I'll be waiting." Davenel hung up, sent for Joseph, who often acted as his lieutenant. "I can't go tonight. Michel Ruguay's coming here." He explained briefly, "May be a checkup for the German cops, one never knows. Dursus knows how to handle that demolition stuff. I don't think there'll be any breakage, those new guards haven't much gumption for fighting at night, but as usual—wounded at the Black Stones, and try to hide the dead."

It was after nine when Michel's car ran into the yard. His daring to drive at night, the fact that he had gasoline, all proved that he was indeed well in with the Master Race. Special authorization was needed for both. He entered the study, looked about, smiled.

"I've always envied you this place. Quiet. Mind if I sit down? Thanks." He sank into a chair. His aristocratic face was drawn, the corners of his eyes seamed with tiny wrinkles. He was a very nervous, very tired man. But he had changed at his house—fresh flannels, a gray shirt, a neat scarf—and, as always, the perfection of his attire, his casual ease of manner, something elegant, over-bred, irritated Davenel. The man always managed to look as if he were wearing silk stockings and a parade sword. "Can we be overheard?"

Davenel closed the door, hauled a heavy drape across it. "Not now. They built solid walls when the farm was put up."

Michel took a cigarette from a silver case, offered one to Philippe. "Sorry, nervous. English. Hard to get." He puffed several times, appeared to make up his mind. "The Boches"—he gestured with his hand sharply—"*fichus*, done for."

"But you told me over the phone—"

"I know what I said—over the phone. But there are signs, there are signs. The Germans have known the invasion was coming this month. I think they expected it further east—a detail, doesn't matter where it comes. As you know, my father-in-law has high connections in banking. *Eh, bien,* a lot of transfers of funds have been made not only from Germany but from Switzerland, to Portugal and South America. By people who ought to know what's ahead." Michel wiped his hands on a silk handkerchief. "Oh, I understand it's good news for you."

"It is, certainly."

"How do you feel about me?"

"Eh? Well, I feel you've made a bad mistake."

"We've been friends since boyhood. Can I ask you a favor?"

DAVENEL shook his head. "I'm afraid my influence is limited, Michel. I believe you'd best go away until things cool down a bit."

"Oh, that's surely right. But I am in a bit of a mess in another way, old man. My father-in-law has decided to gamble on another shift at the last moment. He's sixty-seven years old, and he can't realize that there may be some shooting. He says all we risk is a few months in a comfortable prison. A trial, acquittal. He says the Allies and the Gaullists will make mistakes that'll shift public opinion to the midway lines again.

"That's all very well. But I know that tough chaps have been dropped by parachutes to lead the partisans, and that for a few weeks there'll be a lot of risks. Now, all I own in the world except the mansion and the farms here is tangled up with the old man's business, in his banks, in his safe. As you may know, I haven't lived with my wife, his daughter, for years—"

"No, I never hear society gossip."

"—so there's no sentimental attachment. He's very dictatorial, and if he discovered I was not gambling along with him, he'd find some way of liquidating me. And old as he is, he watches everything, and would spot a shift of funds immediately. I'm willing to chance living abroad on the income from the farms here. It'll be poverty—"

"I'm comfortable on one-half of one farm, Michel."

"But there'll be the exchange. However, I'm willing. But I am afraid the new government will freeze all funds, seize the property of fugitives. Oh, I know, that's no more than our side did. But I must expect that. So here's my proposition: You're well known in the region. Nobody will touch a thing belonging to you. I sell you the whole business for a nominal sum, whatever you have available, doesn't matter—will help my travel expenses—I'll accept one hundred and fifty thousand francs down. You can send me some money quarterly. When things clear up, I return the money with interest, and a bonus of one hundred thousand. and you return the property to me."

"I don't know—" Davenel mused.

"About helping a fugitive? I am not a fugitive as yet. And if I ever come back to claim my estate, which is probable, it will mean that I am legally in the clear in France." Michel produced a wallet, took out, several sheets of stiff paper, which he unfolded and smoothed with his hand. "I had this drawn up by a notary. All we have to do is copy it on this blank, which has the seals, and call in Old Man Chrétien for a witness. This other is a deed of sale."

"You wouldn't take my word, Michel?"

"Business is business. You might die."

"True. I might die."

Yes, Davenel thought, his father had been right—Michel had a head for business, despite his birth. He was as shrewd as any peasant. For instance, he had brought several sheets of blank document paper, bearing the state seal, in case more than one draft were needed for the deal.

But Michel was not all wisdom. For instance, he had picked the wrong side when he went over to the Nazis. And despite his self-assurance, he was very jittery underneath.

A muffled explosion shook the night, very remote, like a single rumble of thunder. Some miles away, dynamite had blown up a viaduct on the narrow-gauge regional railway. Davenel automatically glanced at his watch. On schedule. The few seconds could be accounted for by the distance sound had to travel. He saw Michel smiling at him.

"Not unexpected, eh, Philippe?"

"What?"

"That explosion. You've been glancing at your watch for ten minutes." Michel smiled, waved his hand. "Hope it was on time. And, speaking of time, I wish we could get this settled. I have a lady at the mansion."

"Madame de Bratteville?"

"Don't be so rural. On my passport, yes. Charming, the exact picture of my grand passion, Yvette. Remember her? Oh, yes, you do—my last semester at Poly, and she visited me in that hole of a garrison town, which for a Parisienne was *love*."

It was as if a mechanism had been set to work in Davenel's mind. Yes, he recalled Yvette. Her legs had been better than her voice.

"What became of her? Did she make opera?"

"You must know she didn't." Michel smiled. He had always had leisure for a little boasting. "No, she gained weight, married—a nice chap who canned asparagus. Met her in 1938 on the Riviera, a widow, quite the lady. I wonder how many stems of vegetables a million francs represent? She lives in Cannes. The only woman my wife ever was jealous of. And even as a young girl Yvette was not a goose, not a bourgeoise.

"She clung with flattering obstinacy. I told her off, shipped her away, and she'd pop back and send me perfumed notes at the barracks. The orderlie's liked to sniff them. Ah, well—" Michel beamed at beautiful memories, sighed and said, "Let us get down to business."

Davenel nodded, then asked casually, "She was the woman at your place the night Girbal called, wasn't she?"

"Yes." Michel frowned, dimly aware that he had made a slip, then turned red. "Look here, when did I tell you this?"

"Oh, you didn't," Davenel assured him. He could play a game once it was started, he discovered. "But I knew that Sergeant-Chief Taignon had covered for you that night. I figured that you knew what you were doing, even if it looked pretty dirty."

"I'll explain—"

"Why?" Davenel motioned casually. "Old stuff."

"No wonder you've been sort of stiff-necked with me," Michel said with supreme innocence. "I look like a louse. But here's what happened—no, I have time. I was at my apartment, Yvette had come to town by surprise. Then that young corporal pops in. I can see he's been drinking, and all the time he is talking to me he's staring at Yvette, who is—who was nice filling for a kimono. He hiccups in my face, very confidentially, a weird story about German spies and a secret meeting. Yvette, who has a sense of humor, gives him a crême de menthe, which just finishes him. He just mumbles on, I pat him on the back, push ten francs into his damp hand, and shove him out.

"A COUPLE of days later, I get summoned to the Staff Building. A half-dozen officers are there, looking pretty grim. Girbal grins at me, as if we had herded cows together for years. Nobody tells me what it's all about. I think the chap got drunker and got into some sort of trouble. I don't want things to come out. My fiancée has given me an ultimatum about Yvette, she is spoiled and imperious, I know she'll break off without listening to an explanation if it comes out. At the time, I was in love with her, and I confess that I knew that having her father behind me would help my career. Why, I think, should I lose everything to help a drunk? I deny seeing him, sign a paper.

"When I realized what the matter was, it was too late. I thought of going to the colonel and making a clean breast of it. But I had signed that damn paper, and if I admitted lying, I had to resign from the service. No marriage, no career. Just because a dumb guy had pushed himself, without being asked, into my private life. What would you have done?"

"Yes, it was a sticker," Davenel admitted.

"And who expected them to sock him with twenty years? I figured he'd get six months. I have thought of the poor devil often, but how could I help him without getting into a bad mess myself?"

"How do you feel now?"

"The same. He's probably dead. They don't last long in that climate."

"He's alive." Davenel explained briefly. Long since, the red had left Michel's face. He was grayish, his lids quivered nervously.

"It's an admission, nevertheless," he protested.

"Let me be frank, Michel," Davenel declared. "That admission can't hurt you much, compared to the trouble you're in now. You have

"The Boches had a searchlight down below and they turned it on us, shooting at us with automatics and a machine gun."

no reputation to preserve, no honor to uphold—"

"I do not permit anyone to say—"

"Then what do you wish to escape from? There will be a lot of revisions of trials as soon as this mess ends. All the people sentenced by French courts for doing things against the Germans will be freed, by legal action. There'll be so many, nobody'll pay attention to any one. Girbal is very small fry as a traitor, these days. Ministers, generals, admirals, deputie's will get the headlines."

"True enough."

"Nobody'll know, Michel. I know how the poor fool has suffered, for years. He's paid for pushing in on you. I'll stretch a point and do the favor you asked for me—but without benefit to myself. I suppose I can let the law of France decide what you are."

Michel nodded. "All right. I'm glad of the chance." He sat before the desk, wrote rapidly

and without hesitation. Then he copied the deed of sale, with the qualifying clauses. While Philippe checked the first draft, he made another, for himself. "Get your witnesses."

Davenel called in Old Man Chrétien and a laborer, older, more stooped. Chrétien signed as witness, the other made a cross under which Davenel wrote his name. And although the witnesses did not know what they had signed, the old chap suggested a drink. Davenel noticed that Chrétien did not drink, merely touched the brandy to his lips. They left.

"I'd like to see the fellow," Michel said, softly.

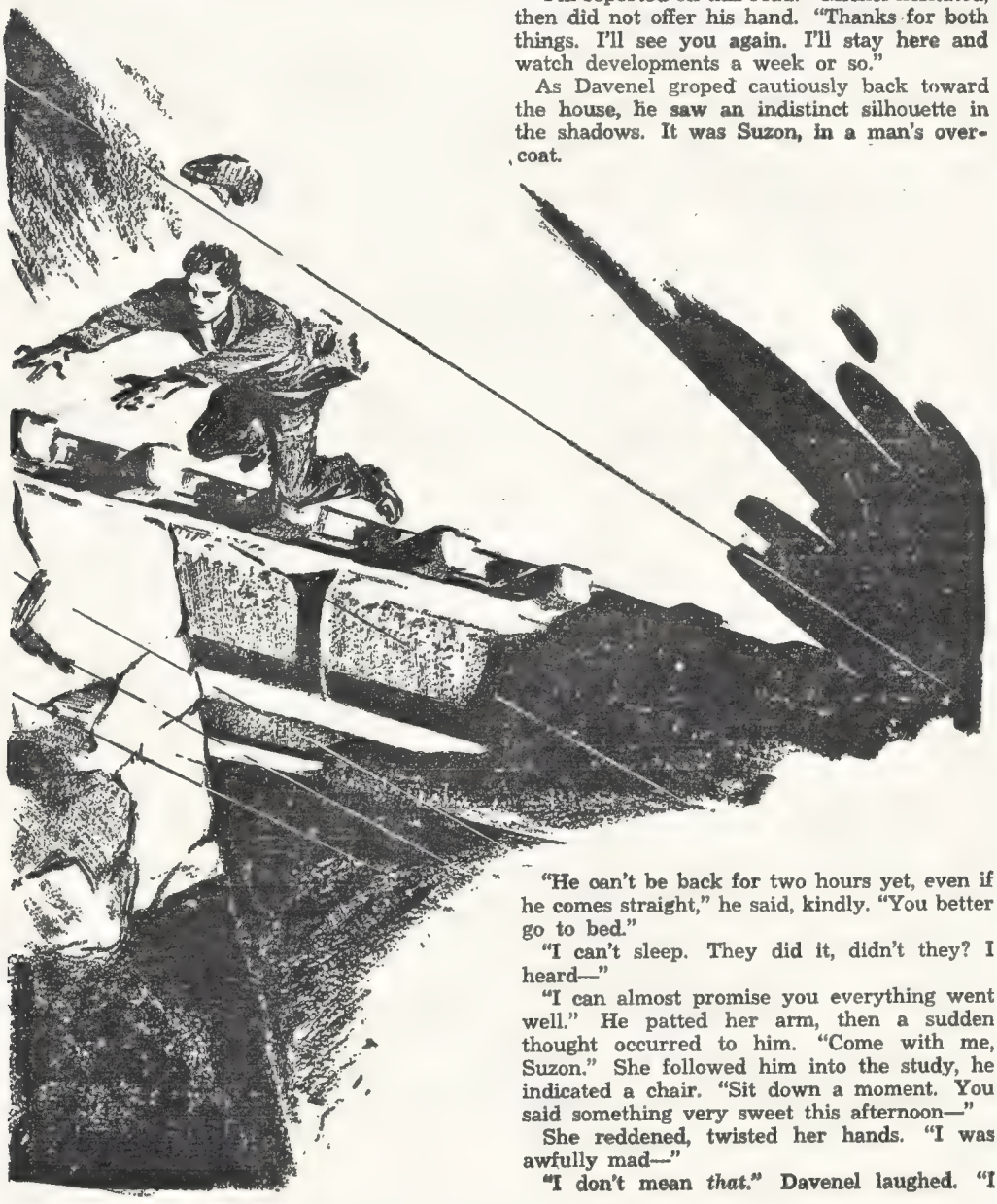
"He's asleep in one of the other buildings. If you're here a couple of days, he'll probably thank you."

"Oh, that's not the idea. I'd like to add a couple of thousand francs. And maybe explain. But"—he smiled and winked—"if he is asleep, don't disturb him."

Davenel escorted Michel to the car, to keep the dogs in the yard from howling too long. "You sure our friends won't shoot at you?"

"I'm reported on this road." Michel hesitated, then did not offer his hand. "Thanks for both things. I'll see you again. I'll stay here and watch developments a week or so."

As Davenel groped cautiously back toward the house, he saw an indistinct silhouette in the shadows. It was Suzon, in a man's overcoat.



"He can't be back for two hours yet, even if he comes straight," he said, kindly. "You better go to bed."

"I can't sleep. They did it, didn't they? I heard—"

"I can almost promise you everything went well." He patted her arm, then a sudden thought occurred to him. "Come with me, Suzon." She followed him into the study, he indicated a chair. "Sit down a moment. You said something very sweet this afternoon—"

She reddened, twisted her hands. "I was awfully mad—"

"I don't mean *that*." Davenel laughed. "I

mean when you asked me to help you. I've known you all your life, Suzon, and you're a sister to me." He had never been more sincere in his life. "So, I have fixed it." He reread the statement made by Michel, folded it, placed it in a strong envelope. He sealed it with wax. "I shall tell your father that Emile is a fine man in every way, that you couldn't have a worthier husband. And the next time you are alone with Emile, give him this envelope. He should get it from you."

"It's important?"

"Cost a hundred thousand francs," he said jokingly. "And Emile wouldn't part with it for a million. Tell him also that some people win the lottery two or three times over. He'll laugh."

She rose, twisting the envelope in her hands.

"Monsieur Philippe, when I was little, the other girls used to kid me about how much I loved you." She looked at him steadily. "I don't know why I tell you that, but somehow it is to thank you. Maybe because I loved you for this in advance."

"That's very likely, Suzon," he agreed. "Good night."

The door closed, her footsteps receded into the house. All was well. Chance had dropped the solution in his lap. Nevertheless, he experienced a sensation of impending doom and vague, bittersweet regrets.

CHAPTER IV

THE CRICKET AND THE BUTTERFLY

MUFFLED voices awoke him. It was almost dawn. He had fallen asleep, fully dressed, in an easy-chair. He waited for a moment, expecting Dursus to knock on the door, to report. Then he set out to investigate.

In the main room, Old Man Chrétien, clad in a long white shirt, hairy legs sticking from unlaced work shoes, was holding back a group of women. "Nobody from here got hurt. Don't go out with lanterns—they may have been trailed near here. I'm telling you, all ours are safe." He caught Davenel's eye. "They're washing up, Monsieur Philippe."

Davenel hastened to the cemented room next to the dairy where he had installed showers for the help. Five naked men were taking turns under the jets. A heap of linen in a corner oozed pinkish liquid. Dursus, muscled and handsome as a classic marble statue, came forward, drying himself.

"Tough night," he said.

"Things went wrong?"

"And how! Achille, you hide our clothing, eh? Sopping blood." Dursus gave a strangled laugh. "We wrecked the damn thing, it'll take them a couple of days to fix it. But we lost two guys. Gosh, am I tired!" He named the dead men, who were from a distant farm. "We lured the sentry away, as usual, and when he got scared, he alerted the guys in the shack. They came out to help him look around, and they followed our decoy through the brush, shooting once or twice. Me and two other guys got on the tracks, following the outside rail. One of us, Antoine, forgets and crawls in between, over the ties. The Boches had planted S-mines, anti-personnel stuff. And he caught one.

"He was hurt bad, but he could walk. The Boches had some sort of a searchlight bunked down below in the cut, and they turned it on, shooting with automatics and one machine gun. The three of us tumbled heads over buttocks down the embankment. It was no time to pick violets.

"They must have doubled the gang there—they were all over the place looking for us. I left Antoine with some of the guys and sneaked back. They were busy using that light to find us, see, and I set that charge without anyone bothering me. They thought we'd all scrammed. I started away, and then the charge went off. It was the funniest thing—the shock set off three or four of their little S-mines. I think some of them caught it.

"Took me better than an hour to find our guys. Antoine was bad off. He'd heard that little phut-phutting the damn things make, and tried to hold it, or toss it aside, or something. No hands left to speak of, and he was spurting blood. His face was bad, too." Dursus licked his lips nervously. "We hid his body in a ditch. Then we met some others, and they had a dead guy, and one with a smashed knee.

"One of their dogs broke his leash and galloped up to us. We had to shoot it. That brought them around fast. So we had to drop the dead man. Blanchet's farm was closest, but we knew they'd look there. So we split, and some of us led the chase away, while the others took the wounded guy into the forest. They'll leave him at the Rocks. Old Man Lefuret's up there, the healer—he's as good as a doctor, any day. The rest of us shook off the dogs and scattered."

"Get some sleep. They may be here early."

They were there early. Shortly after six o'clock, two armored cars and a troop transport reached the farm. These were first-line troopers—tough, weatherbeaten young veterans, led by a youthful lieutenant who spoke almost perfect French. With a trace of boredom in his voice, he ordered every male over sixteen into the open, checked them from an official list.

"Your hands!"

Abrasions, scratches mean something on the hands of a clerk, less on a farmer's. But the lieutenant did his job; squads looked through the houses, the barns.

"Silly business," he told Davenel, "but I have orders. I don't suppose anyone here could identify a couple of bodies found last night and now in the police morgue at Morantain?"

"An accident?" Davenel asked.

"Eh?" The young German looked at him hard, smiled. "Very nice. You might say an accident. Ridiculous, all this, isn't it? One should shoot systematically or do nothing at all."

The papers, some from Lyons, some from Dijon, were brought by the postman. They called the Anglo-American landings an invasion, predicted victory for the Reich, but through the dutiful prose shone a sardonic, cocky glee. Everyone at the farm had heard all the details over the radio, the official radio as well as the secret, but to see them in printed characters, strong and black, made everything seem realer, more tangible.

"Get to work. That patrol may double back," Davenel ordered. "Everything as usual." He wanted to combat the elation, the holiday spirit. The raids at Dieppe and St. Nazaire had caused fatal outbursts in this remote region!

Soon after, two German planes, slow reconnaissance machines, circled low over the valley, flying just above the treetops at times. Children shrieked, cows bellowed, yet until a year before, planes had been so familiar a sight as to arouse no interest. But the British bombers which had flown over on the delivery route to Turin, Milan, Genoa, had shifted their bases from Britain to North Africa and Italy.

At nine o'clock, Michel telephoned. "Can you have that check ready? I'm going to Morantain for lunch and I'll pick it up on the way."

"I'll have to make arrangements, transfer funds—"

"For such a sum?"

"Yes. I'm not a millionaire," Davenel snapped. "Oh, all right, I'll settle it by telephone."

HE managed to reach his attorney at Morantain, Maitre Bayon. As he could not explain clearly over the telephone, the old man suggested coming out. He arrived in an ancient tilbury drawn by an old horse, both beyond the greed of the Germans. The notary was sixty-odd years old, strong for his years, and had been very annoyed in the past by his facial resemblance to Admiral Darlan.

"Wanted to talk to you, anyway. Hell's broken loose in town—seven people killed. Pétainists' riots." He rubbed his dry, veined hands together. "The regional's viaduct was blown up again last night, stalling some supplies. They had twenty-five hostages ready to go. I went to the Kommandantur—half of those people were my friends, the others my enemies, and at my age, you cherish both because you can't make any more—and raised a question as to just what town was responsible.

"They're in a funk, you know. In 1941, for much less, I got my remaining teeth knocked out. In 1942, for a protest of the kind, I was locked up for three months and fined. But this Von Ganz, or Gratz, or whatever—he said he would ask for instructions. Postponed the business. They're worried. In the south, partisans are fighting in the open. But what's this business about needing one hundred and fifty thousand francs?"

Davenel explained, showed him the deed.

"No good, Philippe, my son." The old man chuckled. "He is not the only heir. Older sister somewhere. Can't dispose of the estate without her consent. I never worked for the family, but I'm familiar with local business. Wonder why he takes a chance like that? I'll take this paper. Tell him to drop in to see me."

"He's in a pretty bad jam," Davenel protested. "I'd be inclined to risk the money. I accepted a favor from him."

"Don't be proud. Let it remain a favor. You can get a lot of favors for one hundred and fifty thousand."

The old lawyer had not been gone an hour when Michel drove into the yard. Women and children gathered to stare curiously at the powerful machine, which bore both French plates and the WH recognition plaque of the occupation authorities. In the study, Davenel explained the situation. Michel was furious.

"Why did you consult that old meddler?"

"Seems to have been a good idea."

"You mean about my sister being co-heir? My half would have guaranteed your money, anyway, you couldn't lose. Now, let's be reasonable. I left Vichy with sixteen thousand francs, La Gousse has four thousand on hand, my girl has twenty thousand. How far can I get on that? It won't buy six hundred dollars! For two persons—"

"Sell that car."

"Government property, and I need it." Michel snapped his fingers. "I've burned my bridges. By now, my father-in-law realizes I've quit on him. Can't turn back. I'll take one hundred thousand—"

"You'll have to see Maitre Bayon."

"Where is he?"

"Gone back to Morantain. You might catch him on the road."

"And beg him for a hand-out?" Michel started to walk back and forth. "Come, be a generous winner, Philippe. You have me where you wanted me. I admit I am licked, beaten, humiliated." He gestured widely. "It must have been hard on you, waiting. But it's done. Isn't that enough?"

"I don't understand what you mean," Davenel said.

"You always felt that I had it too easy, too soft—"

Davenel stared, unwilling to believe his ears, to understand. Then he laughed. "You mean—the cricket envious of the butterfly, that sort of business, eh?"

"Well, yes. But you can"—Michel sought for words—"lay off, rest on your laurels. You dug up Girbal and put the pressure on just at the right time. How long did you bide your chance? How did you manage to get him here? I see it all now, you—you envious clod!"

"Are you through?" Davenel asked.

"Not quite—"

"I am. Yes, there is something I've always wanted to do—this." Davenel gathered Michel's lapels, shirt-front and tie in a strong grip, slapped his ears soundly. "I didn't—realize it—but I wanted—to. You and—your childish—conceit!" He shoved Michel away. "And if you mention honor and a duel, I'll kick the seat of your pants." He checked himself with an effort. "I've wondered why I stood for your cheating, even for your treason. Why? Because you're a child, a nasty child, living in a world of men. You lie like a child and cheat like one, and when you can't cajole yourself out of a mess, you throw a fit of rage, like a spoiled brat—"

"Philippe, the mighty plowhand," Michel commented. He adjusted his coat, his shirt, his tie, very calmly. "I'd have even less chance against an ape."

"Oh, get out."

"Would you mind giving me Bayon's address?"

"Ask anyone—well, Rue du Lycée, 12."

"Thank you. Good day, Philippe."

Davenel followed him out. Michel got into his car, started the motor, rolled away. Come what may, Michel managed to have a car, gasoline. Whose car, whose gasoline—that did not matter. Yes, he knew how to swim, as Charles Davenel had put it, but he was beginning to flounder. In the past few hours, Davenel had come to understand that treason, collaboration with the enemy, had found fertile soil in a man who had been from birth a cheat, a loafer, a liar.

The drone of a motor vibrated overhead. Davenel's shoulders tightened instinctively, then he relaxed. The end was in sight, the country would awake from more than four years of nightmare. Two machines were up there, swinging from horizon to horizon, tirelessly. What were they looking for? The Black Stones? The hiding place for fugitives and wounded men they knew must be somewhere in that forest? In May 1941, a battalion of Tyrolese had combed the distant ravines, probed a few caverns. And they had found nothing.

TO HIS surprise, he saw Michel's car coming back. The man braked very near Davenel, leaned out. "I don't know if it interests you, but there's some fellow lying unconscious in the ditch, two, three hundred meters down the road, around the bend."

"Who?"

"How would I know? Just as I reached the curve, he came out of the woods and I saw him fall. Then I stopped alongside. He's covered with blood."

"Why didn't you bring him here?"

"He's bloody, I tell you. And I don't want to mix in anything that isn't my affair. To tell the truth, I'd sooner have gone right on, but someone may have seen me, and I don't want it said that I left a Frenchman to die—that's the way they exaggerate around here. And it would infuriate the yokels even more, as you know, if I told the German patrol. So, it's your cow from now on—you milk it or kill it for beef. Good-by."

Yes, it was Davenel's cow, his problem to handle. The car was off again, after turning, and going very fast. Davenel ran down the road, walked in the direction indicated. He hailed a group of his men working in a field, shouted instructions: A stretcher or a pig-carrier should be brought from the farm. While one man ran across the open ground on the double to do so, three others came to join the boss. One was Dursus. Davenel explained.

"Can't be from our bunch," Dursus said. "We all checked in."

They found the man in the ditch. He was rather tall, with a strong-featured, sunburnt face, now greenish from pallor. He wore brownish garments with patch-pockets, resembling a hunting suit. His boots were new, solid, laced halfway up his calves. He was stretched on his back. Blood was clotted in his hair, smeared over his shoulder and the right side of his face. While Dursus, who had had hospital experience at the Island and frequent chances to use it since, looked him over for injuries, Davenel looked for his papers. He found a sizable sum in French bills and four pistol magazines, loaded, in a pocket. The latter were probably British or American. They were neither French nor any German type known to them. A card was made out for Raoul Lorch, tinsmith, thirty-one, born in a nearby village.

"Anybody know him? You, you're from the place—"

"Lorch used to have the grocery store, years ago. Died in '36. Had a couple of sons, who left the country. This might be one of them. They weren't in school with me, so I'm not sure."

"I think I know about him," Davenel said, refolding a letter. "What's the matter with him?"

"Well, he was hit by something at the base

of the skull. A club, or a gun butt, anything like that. And there's something wrong with his right leg. Broken, I think." Dursus fingered the leg below the knee and the man's breathing deepened, uneasily. "Take it easy, nobody'll hurt you, pal."

"Parachutist," Davenel explained shortly. "Due about now. Must have busted that shin when he landed." He turned over one limp hand. "Crawled some distance. Look at those palms. Poor devil! Léon, you head for—"

"Just a moment, Monsieur Philippe. Hold it a while, Léon." Dursus climbed on the road, looked about as if searching for something. "Remember who found him." When Davenel joined him, he said in a low voice. "Planted there."

"What makes you think that?"

"Lots of things. To start with, it's a good twenty meters from the woods to the ditch, sloping grass. This guy couldn't walk. He'd crawl. So you couldn't see him fall, could you, from the seat of a car? And a car would cover three hundred meters faster than a wounded man could crawl twenty. Then the guy left no trail in the grass, and the humus on his toes and hands is from forest soil. Also, I don't think he'd move an inch after that sock on the bean. Let's see something else—" Dursus hopped back to the ditch. "Look!" He drew back an eyelid. "Morphine, dope—and don't tell me he ate bad mushrooms."

"But why?"

"So you'd take him in, and if you were in the know and knew what he was, you'd notify others. They have patrols on the roads, and those two suckers up there." He indicated the planes. "And they'll watch for phone calls, too. They got the poor slob somewhere early this morning and thought it would be a swell idea to use him." Dursus grinned. "Sounds tough to you. Not used to them yet, are you? You get to believe people are tough after you've heard as many yarns as I have, out there. And in peacetime, too."

Davenel lighted a cigarette nervously.

"Why didn't they just let somebody find him? Why should Ruguay—"

"They may be in a hurry. And there may be some other reason."

"What should I do, Dursus?"

"Look, suppose these were normal times and you found a guy hurt in a ditch, what would you do?"

"Take him to the farm and notify the gendarmerie."

"That's what you'll do."

"But they'll—they'll—"

"They'd get him anyway. And one thing, they probably won't shoot him when he's like this. They'll have doctors for him." The ex-convict looked down at Lorch sadly. "And who knows, before he gets well, things may have changed."

CHAPTER V

LILY OF FRANCE

"YOU are not a true patriot, Davenel." Monsieur Alfred Chaleux was furious. He had reached the farm at midnight, identified himself—and exploded in the study. He had been at one time an engineer for the Department of Bridges and Roads. He had been dismissed long before the war, but represented himself as a political martyr. He was a rangy, nervous man of fifty, with insane, greenish eyes, and undoubtedly a crank. He was hurt because he had obtained no rank in the Forces of the Interior.

In his own name and in the name of a vague group he claimed to represent, he asked for an attack on the Boches without delay. According to him, replacement ammunition could be dropped by parachute. "We must march on them, sweep them out of the Morantain, show our liberators that we are worthy of liberation. As this moment, in the south, partisans—"

Davenel kept his temper. Small towns swarmed with generals.

"There are reasons."

"Name your reasons. If you are timid, at least permit me to act, give me authority to—"

"Reasons," Davenel repeated. "To start with, I'm under orders not to come into the open unless forced to. We don't want to give the Boches a motive to ship our livestock off to Germany. In the south, their garrisons are spread thin, while we're across one of their main lines of retreat. They'd detach first-line troops against us, force us into the hills, burn the farms. They've already reinforced their units at Morantain. There's the haying to do—"

"Always reasoning like a peasant! Haying!"

"It is best," Davenel replied with cold humor, "to keep people alive to enjoy freedom when it comes. The cattle will need hay this winter, no matter who's boss here."

"Take note"—Chaleux twisted his mustaches—"that I was for direct action. I have no friends to spare among the collaborationists. You force me to bring it up, Davenel: You have. Ruguay de Bratteville. He's visited you, you have shaken hands with him, given him drink. Your attitude has been odd. This afternoon, you turned over to the gendarmes a man they had to surrender to the Boches, one of ours.

"Then Maitre Bayon comes to see you this morning, and is arrested a few hours later. And Ruguay de Bratteville's seeing the hostages, what do you make of that? Telling them that good, prosperous Frenchmen, the elite of commerce and the professions, have been paying with their lives for the thoughtless rowdyism of illiterate hoodlums, bolshe-

viks, tramps. And just after that comes your order to keep quiet, no attacks, no shooting."

"Orders given me," Davenel declared.

"By whom? I have a radio, I didn't hear them."

"You were not supposed to." Davenel rose and stepped closer to his caller. "I know you came armed, and why. You wanted to challenge me." He patted the man on the shoulder. "You're impatient, a patriot, and your heart rules your head. I know the risks you have run, writing and distributing pamphlets, giving the news. I'll mention your devotion, never fear. Even to this, your coming here tonight—"

"Oh, don't say a word," Chaleux beamed. "I'd like to have shared in the raids, but I can't when secrecy's needed. I—I have a kidney ailment, and any excitement, you understand—"

"Absolutely, absolutely."

"Could I stay here for the night? It's far—"

"It'd be suspicious, wouldn't it?" Davenel escorted him outside into the night, set him on the trail. "Be careful, the Boches wouldn't kid about that revolver you're carrying. Good night." Ten minutes after he returned to his rooms, Joseph appeared.

"The dogs act funny, Monsieur Philippe."

"That fool's scent got them excited."

"I mean, *my* dog acts funny. I turned him loose outside after Chaleux left. You know, there's no one to beat him for spotting their dogs and reporting without making a fuss. You can practically talk to him. Well, César's back, and I don't know what to make of him. It isn't the Boches, and it isn't a stranger. There's someone hanging around he's seen before. Nobody from the farm, that's sure. If it's all right, I'd like to go out—"

"They may have extra patrols these nights."

"I won't go far, and I won't carry a gun. And I can hide. I'm worried, César acts so funny."

"I'll come along," Davenel suggested. "I'd like to walk." He picked up a stout stick, tipped with iron, with a loop of leather on the grip. "Let's go."

Very soon they were on the cantonal highway, walking between tall walls of forest. The moon was strong and turned the center of the path to a silvery ribbon slashing through the metallic darkness. The wind was soft, tepid. César, a stocky, tawny beast of mixed ancestry, trotted silently ahead. Long before the chugging of motors could be audible to the men, the dog would give warning. A form of telepathy undoubtedly existed between him and Joseph.

"There's somebody on the road," Joseph whispered.

"I know. That nightingale's leading him."

The liquid notes of the bird broke out, ceased, broke out again, always nearer. On a deserted road at night, a nightingale will often accompany a pedestrian, perching on trees or poles some distance ahead. Joseph got a good hold on his club, and the dog hung back, uttering soft, moaning sounds. "I don't get it. He's nuts."

"Hold him. I'll take a look."

DAVENEL went on a few yards. Then, in a shaft of moonlight stabbing between tree crests, he saw a dim silhouette on the road, still some distance away. He halted, whistled some modulated notes familiar to the farmers. The stranger vanished. Nothing was heard save the silvery calls of the toads. The bird had flown away. Davenel signaled to Joseph to come up with the dog.

"I saw someone. Went into the woods on the right." He added, puzzled, "I heard no plane close tonight, or I'd think another chutist was around."

"Guy's got no gun," Joseph declared. "I can tell when César's seen a gun."

"Might make a mistake once. Or maybe the gun's hid in the guy's clothes." Davenel paused irresolutely. "Maybe we better go see. It's always best to find out. Here's where the guy ducked, just about here. Get him, César!"

"Tell you what, Monsieur Philippe," Joseph whispered, holding back the dog. "You go back and bunk in the bushes near pole 541. Me and César, we track him and push him your way. Don't take no chances."

Davenel went to the assigned spot. It was well chosen, as a mass of granite made footing difficult inside the forest fringe, and a bushy slope flanked the road. The stranger, who manifestly preferred level ground, would hesitate to circle the rocks inside the trees. At first, he only caught Joseph's intentionally loud hisses to the dog. Then came a rather loud crackling.

Pebbles rolled, twigs snapped, someone panted. Davenel loosened the leather cord to form a noose. He had poached in his youth and could move about noiselessly. He took a diagonal path to intercept the prowler. A round object bobbed into sight above a bush, vanished, reappeared nearer. In the shadow of the trees, it seemed like an enormous head—or a head wearing a helmet. At last, he threw his noose, snapped it tight, closed in, grasped the body. The next moment, he eased it to the ground, frantically loosened the leather line. He had discovered that his captive was an almost nude woman. Of course, he thought. The large blob was her head, her hair.

Joseph arrived, holding on to his dog.

"It's a woman!" Davenel announced.

"No kidding!" There was a short pause, then a wondering whistle. "Sure is. Ain't got much on. César knows her, licking her hand

like that. Down, César, down. Cut that out!"

"I hope she—I hope I didn't—"

"No fear, she's breathing now."

"I went pretty easy, but you never know—"

"Ah—" the woman said, and added, at once, "Don't hurt me, please don't hurt me—"

"Don't shout. Nothing'll happen to you," Davenel assured. "We're French. Who are you, what are you doing here?"

"You're French? Take me to Monsieur Davenel."

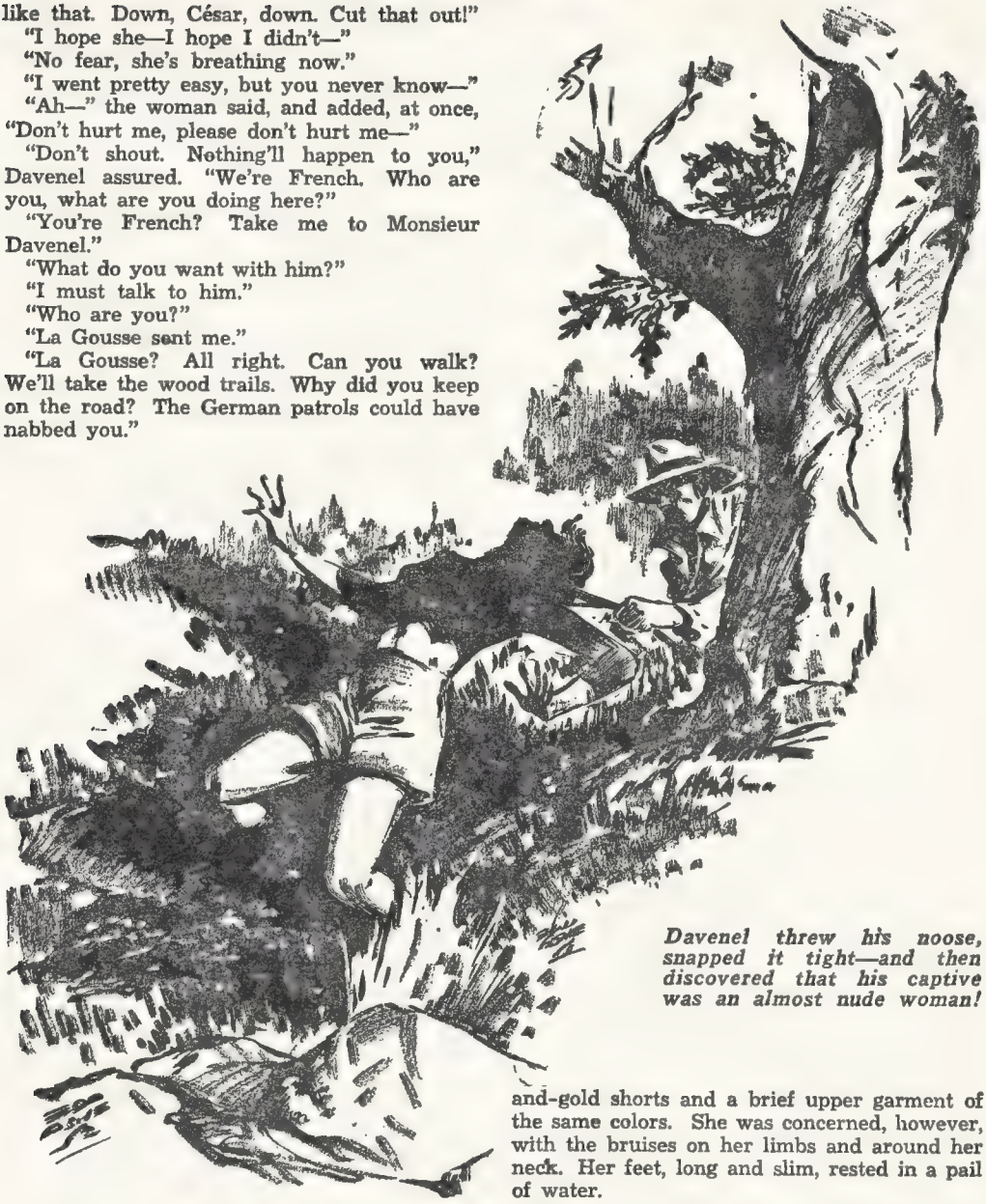
"What do you want with him?"

"I must talk to him."

"Who are you?"

"La Gousse sent me."

"La Gousse? All right. Can you walk? We'll take the wood trails. Why did you keep on the road? The German patrols could have nabbed you."



Davenel threw his noose, snapped it tight—and then discovered that his captive was an almost nude woman!

"I know. I hid from one. I—I'm scared in the woods."

Half an hour later, Mademoiselle Lily Broutta sat in an easy-chair, completely recovered. Michel's lady guest was the oddest game Davenel had ever caught in Bauffremont Forest, a tall, long-legged blonde, twenty-two or three, with a statuesque body and a beautiful face. Davenel, still somewhat startled, wondered if he should offer her his robe, but she did not seem at all self-conscious in her green-and-gold shorts and a brief upper garment of the same colors. She was concerned, however, with the bruises on her limbs and around her neck. Her feet, long and slim, rested in a pail of water.

"Well, you can brag about scaring me," she said as Davenel looked up from a scrap of paper he had been reading over and over. "I think I fainted, for the first time." She laughed, puffed at her cigarette. "Won't even help me fake a faint. Just went blank. Can't remember a thing."

"You can kill a man like a rabbit with that, if you jerk hard," Davenel admitted. He illustrated with his hands. "Snaps the spine."

"You'll have to get me out of trouble, Philippe."

"I'll try my best. You heard the instructions."

"It's funny." She laughed charmingly. "To think it was that sweet old César trailing me! I heard him sniff, and I thought he was a wolf or a bear—I know there aren't any, but then—and I kept saying, 'go away, go away!' Wasn't he smart to come and get you, though?" She looked around curiously. "This is a swell room, Philippe. I bet you have a girl friend with taste. That drape on the big window, for instance, a man would never—"

"La Gousse sent you?"

"Oh, yes, business is business." She pouted at him prettily, broke off a piece of biscuit to dip in her wine. "Michel came back to the mansion late this afternoon, with three German officers in his car. He had to introduce me, because I was fooling around on the tennis court. But he tells me I have a headache. He's awfully jealous, too much so for a man his age.

"THEY talk in German, right in front of me. They have drinks. Then Michel takes me upstairs. He says I'm to have dinner in my room. Says if the Germans got fresh, which they might as they're drinking, he couldn't say much. We get into an argument, about my coming down to dinner. We're interrupted once, by a telephone call from his father-in-law. He says he's run into some trouble, but everything is now going well and he'll be back by June twelfth, Monday."

"You mean his father-in-law calls him up? He's in touch with the Ministry?"

"Why not?" Lily wondered. "He's a secretary there, isn't he?"

"You didn't expect to go to Spain or Switzerland?"

"Me? What for? I haven't even a passport."

Davenel was taken aback, tried to reason things out. Aloud, he urged, "Go on, *mademoiselle.*"

"Well, just an hour or so after I told him all right, no dinner and I'd lock the door, and he laughed—a lot of cars come in, big vans, and soldiers get out. As soon as one is empty, it leaves. Some of the soldiers stick around, most of them seem to go to the two farms."

"How many? What kind—SS, regulars, reserve?"

"Quite a lot—soldiers, you know, with helmets and guns. Michel comes up, knocks on my door and asks if I'm still mad. I don't move, I don't answer. He goes away. A little later, La Gousse knocks and I open. He has a tray. Usually, he just slaps it down and gets out—his old woman's jealous—but he hangs around until I ask him what he wants, a tip?

"He looks at me oddly. Then he says I can get him killed for what he is about to say. I get him wrong and say to him all right, save it, go roll his hoop. He's almost crying, and I decide it's money, or love, or something. He says am I French? I admit it. He says he's in a jam. Nobody can leave the farms, something awful's going to happen, and will I help? He says they don't know he was brought up near Alsace and knows a lot of German. He's got the information all down on a paper. I ask how far it has to go, and he says maybe fifteen kilometers. I say, nothing doing.

"Well, to make it short, he talks me into walking fifteen kilometers, at night, in the country. He's an awfully sweet old fluff, La Gousse, and he can talk. He says from the looks of things, Michel won't be coming upstairs until very late, and won't want to make a row about the locked door—La Gousse is smart, eh? With all those Boches ready to laugh, you see?

"But, I say, the sentries will stop me. He says no, they won't think I'm going far dressed this way. Says they know their officers are in the house, and they won't dare speak to me, as they can see I belong there. I say I'll try it, and he tells me to chew up the paper if they stop me, like in *Michael Strogoff* or something like that. He says that if I don't make it, I'll have the willies all my life, because of all the dead I'll have let die. I let him go out, then I lock the door and leave over the roof extension and down a pipe.

"I don't go straight for the road. La Gousse coached me. I walk over the tennis court, and they have stuff piled there—guns and things. I amble to the dinky little pool Michel's had built at the brook. There are seven or eight of them there, splashing around, some washing clothes. They don't say anything, just freeze, stooped over. They're so scared you'd think I was a lion or something. I meet a nice kid, a lieutenant, and I ask him can I walk as far as the road, like the major told me. He salutes, grins, and shouts ahead.

"Well, I'm on the road, and I walk back like I was making for the main gate. Still La Gousse, you know. Then I cross the road, go into the woods. Nobody yells, nothing happens. After that, I'm on my own—and things start to happen to me. I bust a heel. I try it barefoot—no good. I bust the other heel on purpose, to walk even. That kills me. So I take my shawl and make bandages for my feet. The bandages come off often, but they're better than nothing.

"I go into the ditch whenever anything passes on the road, just like I'd done nothing else all my life. I get scratches and I get bites." Lily laughed. "Joan of Arc knew a thing or two. A good horse and a suit of armor—nothing like it. . . . That's all."

"Save for César—"

"Yes. I was near the farm a couple of times but walked off. The dogs scared me—I wasn't sure they were chained and they sounded aw-

ful. Then my old pal César—I met him during Joseph's calls at the house—started his stuff. He slinks, you know. And I guess he was puzzled because I kept telling him to go away. Oh, my feet!" Lily brought out one foot, scanned it. "Those nails wouldn't remind anybody of rose petals!"

"You'll have shoes the rest of the way," Davenel promised.

"The rest of the way?" she gasped.

"To a forest outpost. Ten, twelve kilometers. It can't be helped, mademoiselle. If the Boches got you, I'm afraid they'd shoot you."

"Tonight?"

"It will be unhealthy here in the morning." Davenel smiled. "But you won't be alone. I'll send a man with you to guard you."

"And what about the man?"

"He's all right. And César'll watch him."

DURSUS reported, was introduced. He stood very straight, quite at ease, but he watched Lily out of the corner of his eye.

"Take *mademoiselle* to the first outpost, and give the guards this paper for Monsieur Pierre. The Boches will be in the forest tomorrow, but not more than five, six hundred of them. No one must try to go out of the other side of the ravine. They'll have troops there too, probably. If they get too near, authorization to fire. Otherwise, let them beat around the bushes as much as they like. They expect a guide, but they won't have one. It's all written down, anyway, but check up with whomever you contact."

"Understood, Monsieur Philippe."

Davenel went to the door, opened it, called out, "Suzon!"

Suzon appeared, with a heap of garments in her arms, several pairs of high shoes dangling from her fingers. "I don't know what will fit her," she said. "She's pretty skinny."

"Diet, darling," Lily stated, taking up shoes one after another, shaking her head. "Diet. We're rationed in the cities. What's this?" She held up a garment. Suzon named it in a low voice. "Good grief! I've heard of them. Down to the knees, eh? I won't need it. Hand me that skirt, won't you, like a nice girl?"

Suzon obeyed, handling the garment gingerly, as if she were handing a slimy snail to a cobra. "That wasn't mine. I brought stuff to pick from, *mademoiselle.*"

"Mademoiselle Broutta walked from the mansion here to warn us." Davenel informed Suzon. "Fifteen kilometers, at night—"

"She was safer here than in Paris," Suzon stated. "What's there in the country to harm a girl?"

"Why didn't I ask myself that simple question?" Lily wondered. She waved away a Sunday hat. "Give me a shawl, a scarf, anything to make a turban—that's a dear. Now, Philippe, any—" She waved her hand in the air. "With a mirror?"

She returned looking quite elegant, wearing a skirt adjusted with safety-pins, a white blouse and a reddish turban. "Philippe, you might ask Michel—if he'll leave a bag somewhere I can pick it up." She laughed. "How long will I have to stay out?"

"Not long. We'll manage." Davenel hesitated. "*Mademoiselle,* I must thank you—I shall see that you are compensated—"

"In a discreet, non-compromising way. I understand. I'll have a speech of acceptance thought out by then." She extended her hand. "So long, Philippe. Get a better light over that mirror. Come along, Curly. Oh, thank you, my pet."

"It is nothing. I work here," Suzon said. Her face was red and determined. She went to Dursus, kissed him. "He's my fiancé."

"I'll take good care of him," Lily promised. "I like them engaged. Shows they have a generous streak."

Dursus patted Suzon on the arm and, falling into slang himself, said, "Don't worry, kid. I'm bullet-proof." He shook hands with Philippe. "I'll pop right back, *monsieur.* Pick 'em up, Princess, we're setting sail."

He lingered a moment to kiss Suzon again, whispered in her ear, then left with Lily. The farm girl gathered the discarded stuff slowly, seething.

"Did you have to send an engaged man with her?" she asked.

"Joseph's older, he'd get tired. And Dursus is smart, he'll remember a message. Don't be foolish. He's in love with you, so he's the safest man to escort her. A man in love—"

"Don't be silly."

"All right," Davenel agreed. "But she knows he is poor, and—well, she knows the richest and handsomest men in Paris—"

"Like that Michel of hers? Looks like a dressed-up corpse."

Suzon sniffed twice and went out.

In the next fifteen minutes, Davenel sent out three messengers. Each one of these, in turn, would cause other messengers to start out. La Gousse had written him that the Germans had massed two companies near the mansion, which were to occupy Davenel's farm —undoubtedly identified as headquarters— shortly after dawn. Telephone communication would not be open for civilians that day.

At ten, motorized groups would enter the forest through the vicinal roads and the paths, and progress as far as possible up the hills. Infantry, brought to the fringe earlier, would comb the woods, in the direction of the Black Stones. Michel Ruguay de Bratteville would be along with the German officers, to indicate the openings of the ravines leading to the caves. Flames, smoke or gas would be used, forcing the occupants to retreat to the rear,

and escape along the far roads. There, good troops backed by tanks would be waiting to corral the lot.

Lastly, Davenel issued instructions to Old Man Chrétien, who protested at first.

"No help for it," Davenel insisted. "They'd burn it anyway. No, I have no objections to burying anything. But we have only a few hours. Scatter the women and kids—it'll take them a while to round them up at various farms and they may not even bother. They need the food, so they'll go easy."

THEN he sat down for the hardest task in his life: the waiting. He looked around the study: It would probably be gutted in the morning. He would lose much money, for which he might never be compensated. But that was part of this game. You took a gamble and if you lost, you lost. And it was a different anguish, a different fear, from that he had known on the battlefield. There one felt that if one were killed, something would survive at home. He realized then that he had some of his father's strong love for material things, for the symbols of success.

"The son of a bitch," he said aloud.

He was thinking of Michel, who had outwitted him. He saw that he had been subjected, on a small scale, to what his country had undergone four years before. Michel was still playing everything on the Germans to win. He had pretended to despair, to flee, to inspire confidence in Davenel, to make him slip, tacitly admit certain details. He could remember the important personal things that had been spoken during their interviews, but what had he let slip in the casual remarks?

Michel had proposed a business deal, had spoken of it over the telephone, guardedly, but he had mentioned money, checks. Of course, the telephone operators had heard and talked: Davenel was doing business with a Vichyite. Even the quarrel might have been meant to put him off guard for the discovery of the parachutist. Maitre Bayon had protested a deal with Michel over the phone, refused a suggestion from Davenel—and he had been arrested. Davenel knew Michel was solely responsible, but did others?

If it had not been for Dursus, whom bitter experiences had made suspicious, he might have revealed the location of his aides by sending a messenger, easily traced from the air. And even his action in informing the police had caused doubt in many minds. Those who had not been present could not understand why it had been necessary to surrender a wounded man. And the Boches had seen to it that the poor chap's identity leaked out.

Why? To shake the partisans' belief in their leaders, to affect fools like Chaleux. It would be best for the Germans to force the uprising now, while they had first-line troops to spare. Within a fortnight, in less than a month, the campaign in the north might swallow all their reserves. And should the battle go against the Nazis, should they have to retreat toward the Maginot Line, it would be better for them to retire over a region gutted and crushed than to have to cope with partisan bands while under pressure from a pursuing army. Michel's mission had been to smoke out the partisans.

There had been one surprise for him, that business about Dursus-Girbal. Michel had been caught neatly, by chance. Had he refused to sign a statement, negotiations would have been broken off with Davenel. He had surrendered, signed without serious protest, knowing he would have an easy time proving that he had done it for the good of the cause.

In a way, Michel had failed. He had hoped, probably, that Davenel, touched by his panic and humiliation, would speak more freely than he had, offer help in getting away. Even the presence of Lily at the mansion had been a device: A man on an important military mission would not bring along a beautiful girl, a fugitive would.

The minister, the father-in-law, obviously knew all about it. Possibly Michel's wife did also. What people! Nothing mattered to them—home, love, decency were nothing—if only they were permitted to continue on their normal orbit, with the comforts and luxuries they expected in life. That was the upper crust—the upper scum. If this period of trial cleaned it off, blood and years had not been wholly wasted!

"The mighty plowman," Davenel mused.

Just how mighty, Michel would find out. Davenel would have two hundred men available inside six hours, well-armed, organized along army lines—shrewd fighters, seasoned by several years of secret campaigning, chaps who knew the Boche's qualities as a fighter, and his weaknesses; men as brave, as tough as the best German, and more resourceful; men whom long preparation and a swarm of machines had crushed, beaten, scattered, but who had something to live for: revenge—and something to die for: France.

Even during the debacle, in the darkest days of the great retreat, he had heard Frenchmen say, "Get them out of those machines, and we're as good as they are." Since then, Frenchmen had seen their conquerors, the supermen, close-to, and they now said, "We're better than they are."

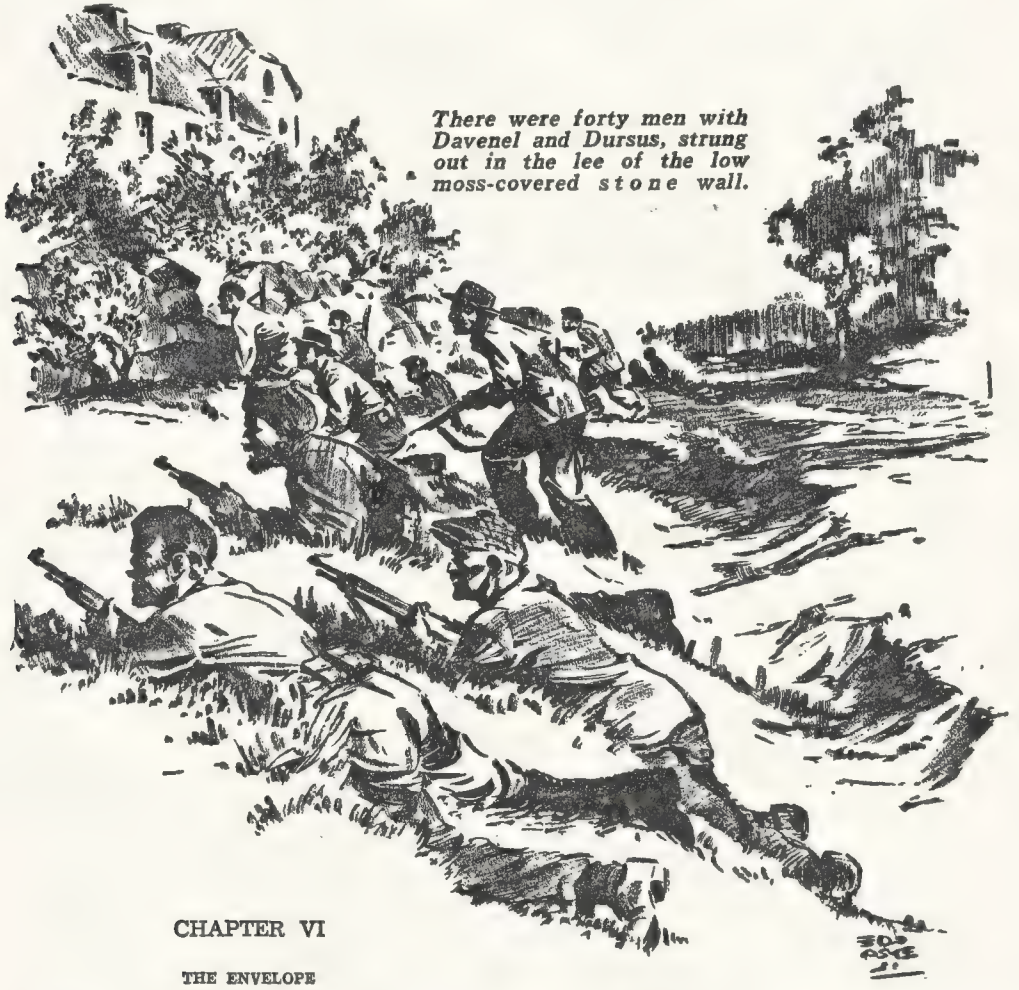
There had been a time when Davenel had carried his despair like a heavy stone in his chest. Then he had seen them, the Boches, with their immense panoply of modern weapons, their ruthless system of reprisals, their police and their firing-squads—arrogant at first, then nervous, then fearful, as England refused to crack, as Russia fought back, as America entered the war. He had seen them fanatics

in the beginning, lusting for victory, stopping for nothing, swimming rivers under machine-gun fire and shells. And he knew them of late—knew that patrol sergeants often held a game dog's muzzle, to prevent his giving an alarm, to dodge the issue, to go off without a fight. Most of them no longer believed their cause worth dying for.

"Not too bad, Monsieur Philippe," Dursus commented, showing he had observed and learned. "Those guys won't find much, by themselves."

"It won't be long now," Davenel assured him.

"Oh, me, Captain, I'm never nervous. Not any more."



There were forty men with Davenel and Dursus, strung out in the lee of the low moss-covered stone wall.

CHAPTER VI

THE ENVELOPE

AS DAY broke, the dew turned to mist, the mist to a light drizzle. Not very far off, jutting above fruit-trees, Davenel could see the roof of the mansion, dark green against the leaden sky. Between two and three hundred men had crossed the road into the forest, in leisurely files of ten or twelve men. To Davenel's satisfaction, these soldiers' collars and shoulder-straps showed the yellow piping of the dismounted cavalry, rather than the light green of the mountain troops. The officers wore the gray trimming of the reserve.

There were forty men with them, strung out in the lee of a low, moss-covered dividing wall of piled stones. Beyond was the orchard, the garage, the tennis-court, a lawn and the mansion.

Most of the partisans were nearby farmers, and looked it. They wore blue blouses, battered hats or snug berets, and ranged in ages from sixteen to fifty-five or sixty. Here and there could be seen a chap with "bought" clothes—a grocer, a town clerk, the schoolteacher who was sub-lieutenant, next in charge after Davenel and Dursus. Each man carried a German

rifle, issue weapon or automatic, and a sack or pouch holding ammunition. Thus far, German ammunition was the easiest thing to replace. And it was odd to remember, Davenel thought, that each weapon represented not only a French combatant but a German casualty.

"Think maybe we should cut the phone line?" Dursus asked.

"No. Might be our bad luck that somebody in there tries to use the phone, gets suspicious. And I want it working, later." Davenel checked details over and over again in his head. "They've strung no wire—they'll communicate by radio. They may have a sentry on this side, but not likely. None by the road, of course."

Dursus had stretched out again, flat on his stomach, his gun and pouch shoved to one side. He was plucking blades of grass, chewing on them. The drizzle was easing, the warmth of the new sun could be felt. He chuckled.

"What's funny, Emile?"

"You got me in hot water. Suzon's sore. She wouldn't even let me kiss her before I left. She—"

"I don't see what's funny in that."

"Oh, she'll get over it. But that chick, Lily—there's a dish! Know what I think, Captain? She was glad to put one over on your friend—the sap high-hats her." Dursus sighed. "There was a time when I'd have been crazy about a jane like that. She kept making cracks all the way. Like 'becoming Queen of the Sioux—'"

Davenel nodded, touched his shoulder. "Pass the word: If that comes right over, no looking up, no moving."

"That" was an artillery observation machine flying two thousand feet above the trees. It swung back and forth twice, evidently to pick up smoke signals, then headed for Morantain.

Davenel looked at his watch. The German detachment that had followed the cantonal road must be nearing the farm. Perhaps it had arrived. With the thick woods in between, the shots would be muffled, and smoke would not be visible for some time.

He felt himself growing tense. When movement started, it would need to be rapid. If those at the mansion succeeded in giving warning, one of the tank groups now headed for the forest could be swerved by radio orders and arrive in twelve minutes. If they did not, he would have better than an hour. One of his men was a young Pole, deserter from the German Army, and could handle the telephone or radio signals.

"Pass the word. Everybody remember signals."

Davenel handed his sub-machine gun to Dursus, beckoned to a young chap some yards away, who passed his rifle to the man next to him, rose and came forward.

"You know what to do, Guillaume? Let's go."

He grasped the lad's arm, dragged him over the low wall into the orchard. They walked under the trees, struggling at times, the young man protesting in a loud voice, "What would I steal around here? I tell you I belong on the farm—"

"We'll see, we'll see! I'm a friend of Monsieur Michel—"

There was a sentry. He had been seated, evidently, near the far wall, and heaved into sight, adjusting a helmet. He came forward a few feet, his Mauser ready, then shoved the weapon under his right arm to button his tunic and adjust his belt.

"So, what is it, what is it?" he asked.

The lad tried to struggle free. Davenel held him and cuffed him, as if losing patience, explaining to the German that the fellow was trespassing. The German looked over his shoulder toward the garage. He hesitated to call out. There were officers in the place, and an alert would annoy them. Davenel had figured that out.

The lad tried to run. Davenel held on, dragged him nearer to the sentry.

"Call an officer," he urged.

"Officer, no! Keep quiet, eh?" The German, a large, red-faced chap, was shocked by the suggestion that an officer be called to handle such a trifle. "No yell, eh, no yell—"

Guillaume pulled free, Davenel managed to catch the back of his collar, the lad clutched out, grasped the barrel of the Mauser. The sentry, naturally, used both hands to hold his weapon. Davenel struck him across the throat with the edge of his hand. Guillaume tore the gun free, reversed it and dug the bayonet into the soldier's chest. They eased the body to the ground. Davenel looked at the upper windows of the mansion, above the roof of the garage, saw no one. He beckoned and his men came silently across the orchard, huddled against the back of the cement building.

WITHOUT delay, Davenel grasped the young fellow again, and hauled him around the corner, into the paved court. There was one car in the garage, and four or five more, bearing German military plates, before it. There were eight Germans there, only one wearing a tunic.

"Are you the sergeant? The sentry told me to—"

"That's the sergeant," the man with the tunic said, indicating a burly man seated on a runningboard with a magazine in his hands. Davenel drew the lad closer, told his story.

"No yell," the noncom said. *"Pas gueuler, hein?"*

The others drew closer, trying to understand the voluble French. Three more appeared,

two in shirtsleeves, one wearing a helmet and toting a rifle. Davenel struck Guillaume on the face, Guillaume protested and kicked. Two of the Germans, at a brief word from the noncom, separated them.

"Now, what's the trouble? Who are you?"

The armed man was pulled aside and overpowered. Four partisans had slid into the garage, and from there covered the lot with sub-machine guns.

"*Pas gueuler, hein,*" Davenel said, in his turn. "No yell. Nobody will be hurt if everything is very, very quiet." By this time, other Frenchmen had circled the garage and cut off retreat. "Your arms?"

The sergeant, who still held the magazine, pointed dolefully at the garage. "In there."

Davenel looked at the mansion. It was not a hundred feet away, but no one was at the win-

"Nobody will be hurt if everything is very, very quiet," Davenel told the doleful Boche.

dows. "Listen, you will be tied up. But"—he drew a tricolor band from his pocket, fastened it on his arm—"we are organized troops and take prisoners. No harm will come to you except from your own side."

The sergeant tossed the magazine into a car, spat. "What the devil can we do?" He gave the good example, holding his arms behind him for one of the partisans to fasten.

"How many men have you around here?" Davenel asked.

"A couple of millions, mister."

"Thanks," Davenel smiled, nodded. "Four men with me. Dursus, watch the windows."

He led the way to the kitchen entrance. A thin old woman and a plump young one were busy, cooking and washing. Both knew Davenel, and bade him a good day.

"How many Germans in the house, Denise?"

"Served thirty breakfasts, Monsieur Philippe. But some of them went away." The old woman cocked her head, squinted her eyes. "I'd say there's a dozen left. All in the dining room, with the boss. Can't you hear them?"

There was a rumble of conversation beyond the pantry doors. Old La Gousse came in, with glasses and saucers on a tray. He smiled at Davenel. "Nice chicken I sent you last night, eh?" He handed the tray to the maid. "Only two of them carry their guns at the table. Guy in a dark tunic, three places from the boss's left. The other has his back to you as you go in."

"Where have they got the radio? Anybody on the top floors?" Davenel put rapid questions, as quickly answered by the old man. Then he gave final instructions, pushed through the swinging doors of the pantry, entered the dining room alone.

His appearance was not noticed for the moment. Someone was telling a story, the listeners were intent on its point.

There were fourteen men at the table, each one facing a thin glass holding a colorless liquid, kept full from several carafes which cast small rainbows on the linen cloth—a splendid marc, distilled from the product of a private vineyard. Most of the guests were smoking, and the smoke eddied lazily in a light breeze from the open windows.

Michel presided. There was a youngish colonel on his right, with the white piping of a divisional staff. On his left was a little round major, shoulder-straps edged in carmine: General Staff. Most of the others belonged to the intelligence and liaison branches. War and death seemed far from their minds, and they paid no attention to the faint vibrations from outside, the rolling of distant detonations.

"Then she said, 'I may have lied about being a widow, but I'm really Portuguese!' "

Michel laughed with the rest, and as he was laughing, he saw Davenel standing against the pantry door. He stopped short, and one by one, the others' faces turned toward the newcomer.

"Don't rise, gentlemen. Please keep your places," Davenel said. Dursus came into sight, threw a leg over the iron grille of a window, settled himself comfortably. He held a submachine gun under his right arm. "Come in, Léon, and take the guns from the gentlemen. It would be very silly," he added, nodding at the man in the dark tunic, "and unkind to your colleagues. Those guns scatter so, and ricochet. Also, there are two hundred of my men around the house, four hundred more within call. You are prisoners. But no harm will come to you save through yourselves or your compatriots."

"You are Philippe Davenel," the major said.

"Captain in the French Forces of the Interior."

"We do not recognize—"

"I make note of your protest, Major. But this is hardly the time for an argument. You will rise one by one, starting at the foot of the table, and go over there. That's it. I regret that you must be bound. You can avoid it by giving your parole to follow obediently." Davenel smiled faintly. "Proper apologies for this disregard of conventions will be made in the future."

"WE have four thousand men in the district," the colonel declared. "And armored machines. You're inviting massacre."

"Thank you for the warning, Colonel. Monsieur de Bratteville, what are you waiting for? Over there—"

"Oh, come, Philippe—"

"Your place as the host, you know." Davenel walked up and down the line. "No need to warn you to be quiet. You, Major, come with me." The stout major obeyed, Davenel led the way down the main hall to another room, where communications had been installed. A German noncom was still there, guarded by five partisans. "The operations this morning are directed from here, eh, Major? And, although nominally under the colonel, you are in charge. I understand German, and so do two of my men. I don't wish your people to know where I am, but I do wish them to understand that I have hostages. I am willing to gamble. Inform Morantain. Do the necessary to avoid the need for reprisals."

The major nodded. "Unfasten my hands—somehow I think it affects one's voice to be tied. A cigarette?" he took several puffs, his eyes squinting into space. "It will have to be done normally, in every way." He shifted to German. "Sergeant, get me operations at the Kommandantur."

The noncom used the ordinary telephone, handed the instrument to his superior.

"Von Stalmer speaking. We are informed

here that a number of our men, including several officers, are in the hands of the partisans. Instructions must be issued for all to proceed with greatest caution until more details are available. Similar instructions are being sent to units participating in local operations."

The German handed back the phone, looked at Davenel, moved his head in an odd little jerk. "That's what would be said. I cannot give actual orders, you see. Not to Morantain." He picked up a pencil, a pad of blanks, wrote rapidly, showed the message to Davenel, then handed it to the sergeant, who spoke into a microphone. Word was given to the various units that civilians were to be spared, gathered into groups of twenty or less, marched to concentration points, pending further orders.

"All more or less as before," Von Stalmer stated. "Women, children, the old, would not have been molested. Orders to suspend operations would have led to suspicion—"

"You did fine, Major. Come along."

"Don't brag about this, comrade," the major said, resting his hand on the sergeant's shoulder. "There are people who'll think we should have been more careless with our lives."

"Yes. Major, yes," the operator grinned.

Nothing was changed in the dining room, save that Dursus and the others had moved in from the windows, sat on chairs.

"What time did you intend to start from here?" Davenel asked the colonel.

"I have no—" The high officer broke off, resumed. "Nine or so."

"We'll be a long way off by then. And don't complain—my farm is going up in smoke fifteen kilometers away. I saw the report at communications. By the way, as you probably realize, the expedition in the forest will draw a blank. Your chaps can't get into the right spots without a guide—you've tried it by map indications before. It won't be wasted motion for everybody. Some of our chaps will plant mines against tanks, for their return trips. Good mines—your own, Tellers. And by next week, we may be permitted to attack."

"Why are you telling me that?" the colonel inquired, with irony. "We need a guide and have no guide. Things must happen to our tanks. Very well. I am also a prisoner. Good."

"Monsieur Ruguay de Bratteville had agreed to guide you."

"That I do not recall clearly."

"That's false," Michel cried out.

"Bring him forward," Davenel said. Two men obeyed. "Now, Léon, the rope." The young man held a length of new, clean rope, with a noose at the end. "Over that," Davenel suggested, indicating the massive wrought iron chandelier in the center. "Test it—yes, it will hold."

Michel smiled, his face calm. "You can't bluff me, Philippe. I've known you too long. Ask me what you want to know. I'll tell you."

"Suzon was so sore about my kidding with the Parisienne that she threw the envelope in the stove."

"I don't want to know a thing from you."

"It's murder, and you'll have to answer for it!"

"If anyone complains, I'll answer for it. If you want a priest, there is one outside."

"Nonsense, we're not that far yet!" Michel managed to laugh. "What's the accusation?"

"You agreed to help the enemy enter the Black Stones." Davenel indicated the stout-laced boots, the breeches. "Unless you meant to play tennis in those. That's treason."

"I—well, suppose I meant to, I didn't. You can't punish me for intentions." Michel tried to pull himself together. He still clung to a belief that Davenel was tormenting him for some ulterior purpose. "You can't take the judgment upon yourself. I want a trial, a court martial, witnesses—"

"Why waste the time?" Davenel spoke sadly. "Look at those fellows. How would they vote?"

HE paused while Michel's glance passed from one partisan to another. Some avoided his eyes, others grinned. "Witnesses: La Gousse heard you. And of course there is Lily—"

"Lily?" Michel smiled again, relieved. "Call her down. She'll tell you we had arranged to go for a tramp early this morning."

"Mademoiselle Broutta has been in the forest since last night. I don't think she'd care for a long walk. Let's cut it short. Do you want a priest?"

"You can't hang me. I demand to be shot."

"You'll be hanged. And justly. Years ago, when we were boys, you asked me to show you the caves. And you swore, as all the boys did, you'd be hanged if you betrayed the passage to outsiders. I've gone back to the very beginning, to your first false oath."

"The priest," Michel murmured.

"You can see him in the pantry. Three minutes."

While Michel was inside, some of the partisans took the table from under the chandelier. Léon tested the rope again.

Davenel felt the palms of his hands grow clammy. He wanted to soften, to yield to pity. But if Michel managed to escape, to benefit by the passage of lenient laws in the future, to come back and be rich, to hurtle through the villages in an expensive car, what could his men believe in? Should people say, in the future, "There goes Monsieur de Bratteville, who sold out to the Boches during the Great War," or, "He was hanged in the dining room of his own house"?

Michel returned, hauled by his two guards. A chair was placed for him to climb on.

"It's murder. You have no right."

"Come on," Joseph called out from a corner, "die like a Frenchman, even if you couldn't live like one!"

Michel was standing on the chair now.

"My God," he said, "what a droll finish!"

Joseph came resolutely across the floor. Michel looked at him, and jumped off.

In the distance, at irregular intervals, the fiery streamer of a tracer-bullet split the night, followed by muffled detonations. The outposts of the partisans were in contact with the Germans. Davenel and his men had retired to a hillock on the fringe of the forest long before the weary troopers could extricate themselves from the woods. They now formed one of the many centers of resistance that dotted France: so many tiny fronts like open, bleeding wounds in the sides of the German Army.

Dursus joined Davenel on the old stone fence behind which fox holes had been dug.

"About Ruguay, will we get into trouble?"

"No. His execution was ordered. He turned in Old Bayon, the attorney, then tried to get information from the hostages about us. The Morantain partisans tried him, condemned him —Joseph brought me the order to carry out the sentence." Davenel cracked his knuckles absent-mindedly. Then he motioned towards a barn, in which the German prisoners were kept. "One of them might escape. But I wanted them to see it. Showed we weren't fooling."

"Yes, I see. Monsieur Philippe?"

"What?"

"You gave Suzon an envelope to give me. The other night after the job at the viaduct, I told her to hold it—I was so tired I couldn't see straight. Was it important?"

"It depends," Davenel replied. "Why?"

"Well, Suzon got so mad about my kidding with the Parisienne, and my being alone with her in the woods, that she threw it in the stove. Now, she's worried, because you said it was worth a lot of money." Dursus stirred uneasily, waiting for his chief to speak, then added, "Doesn't matter, I'm leaving as soon as I can join the army. Guess they'll take me in if you ask them. She'll forget me."

"It wasn't very important," Davenel declared at last. "Just a deed for a couple of fields as dowry. I can make them out again. I even think I can fix things for you, Dursus, if you're sure you want to marry her."

"More than I've ever wanted anything, Monsieur Philippe."

"All right, I'll arrange it, don't worry."

Davenel felt that he could do what he promised. His word would count, and there was the widow of the asparagus king residing at Cannes, whose testimony would prove that Michel had lied. Dursus would live to become a farmer and a good citizen. But Davenel's last faint envy was dispelled. Signs indicated that the end of the Great War would not be the end of all strife for the King of Dupes.

COW TRACKS*

By MAURICE OGDEN

When you've fought your day at Kiesler or at Sheppard or at Sill
And you're in your drabs and low-cuts with a hour or two to kill,
And you think she'll still be waitin', but you're not so sure she will—
Who slaps you on detail or gives you extra drill;
Who's the guy you hate to see the most and who's the guy you fear?
It's the sergeant—
It's the sergeant with the bucky bandoleer!

When you've wore your sweatin' slicker so's to smuggle in a pint,
And you've smoothed it down in front o' you, and tucked it in behind,
And you're safe inside the barracks and you've hid it in your bed
With an evenin's fun behind you and a night of fun ahead,
Who's the one that grins a evil grin and crawls your ruttin' gear?
It's the sergeant—
It's the sergeant with the bucky bandoleer!

When you've goofed it out of P.T., and you're pretty sure you made it,
And you're feelin' high and mighty as a graduatin' kaydit,
And you settle down to bat the breeze and slug a can o' beer,
Who's the one that's always settin' mighty watchful mighty near,
Who's the one that's always listenin' with a snoopin' sort o' ear?
It's the sergeant—
It's the sergeant with the bucky bandoleer!

Oh, he'll put you on fatigue and march your carcass down the street
With your hips at place on shoulders and your elbows on your feet;
He'll work you and he'll cuss you and he'll make you tuck it in
Till your spine's a stalk a cel'ry and you haven't got no chin.
He's a tyrant, he's a devil, he's a Hitler in disguise,
And you'll hate his guts like poison and you'll damn his snaky eyes.
He's your only light o' guidance and that light is mighty dim,
And he don't know from shinola, but your frame belongs to him.

When they dole you out your eagles and your passes ain't till dawn,
And they's candles under blankets where a game is goin' on—
And they's beer from Arky's locker and they's cookies from Des Moines—
Who's the one that jerks the blanket off and confiscates your coin,
Who's the one that eats your cookies, who's the one that drinks your beer?
It's the sergeant—
It's the sergeant with the bucky bandoleer!

And when you finally ship across to fight the ruttin' Jap
And you're standin' trick on Awu or on Palau or Yap,
And you can't get used to jungle and you're sweatin' mad with fear,
Who's the man you'd rather see than half a case o' frosted beer?
It's the sergeant—
It's the sergeant with the bucky bandoleer!

He's affliction to your body, he's corrosion to your mind;
He eats away like acid till you haven't no behind.
He's a sinful, dirty smirker when he puts you in your place,
And he calls you "*Mister* Joseph," then he pushes in your face.
He's a heartless, soulless villain and he ought to be in chains,
He's got no brand of conscience and he uses glue for brains.
Oh, he needles where you're tender and he salts you where you're sore. . .
But he ain't afraid of nothin', and he's been in hell before!

See Camp-Fire—page 8.

SICILIAN

By LEONARD

THE battle on land had rolled to the north, the Italians had all surrendered, there were no Germans left, the population was friendly, and an order published the night before had stated that passes to five per cent of the personnel of American commands might be granted. Before the command post of a tank company a group had already gathered. They were all young soldiers, but their youthful features bore the shadow that trips into the Valley of Death cast upon travelers, even those who are fortunate enough to emerge therefrom.

"Ol' Bazooka Bill!" remarked a new arrival. "Don't like to sweat out a line, do yuh? Bet you got up before reveille to be first!"

"Well," said a soldier who held on to the pole of the CP tent, "I ain't had a pass since we landed at Oran last fall. I ain't takin' any chance on any old oil about five per cent of strength figgerin' out to eight-and-a-half men, and me bein' the half man that won't get to go. I been caught that way before. This time, if anyone goes, I go."

The CP tent had been dug in for protection again aerial attack, so that, when the first sergeant emerged, the waiting men were above him, like an audience in an arena.

"Git up there with the rest of 'em, Bazooka!" ordered the first sergeant. "I want to talk to you men a minute."

"It don't make no difference," expostulated Bazooka. "I was here first, Sergeant Munn, an' I'm goin'!"

The first sergeant looked at him. "You wanna bet on it?" he asked. Bazooka hastily climbed out of the hole and joined the others.

A destroyer was heading directly for the little boat. As the German scrambled to his knees for a look, Bazooka swung his chair upon the man's skull.

ILLUSTRATED BY
J. CAMPBELL FARREN

"Now, men," began First Sergeant Munn, "you know the order. Five per cent of strength —that's five men; there's fifteen of you here."

"Whaddyuh mean, five?" roared everyone. "It's always been eight before—eight-and-a-half, so every other pass-day nine got to go!"

"We had casualties, ain't we?" barked Sergeant Munn. "The orders say stren'th, an' outfits don't get no stren'th from casualties, do

FISH STORY

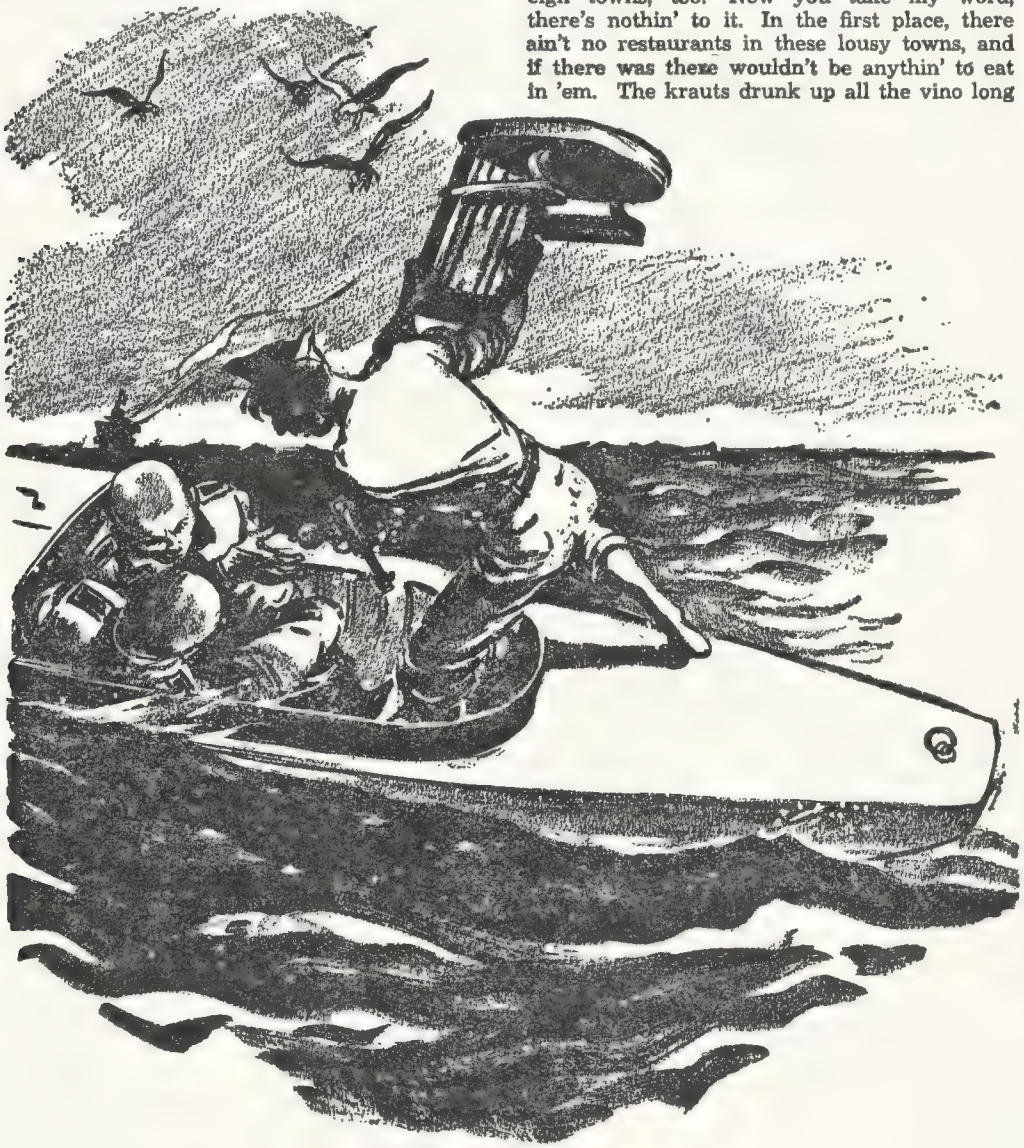
H. NASON

they? So it's status of personnel as of today; Comp'ny commander says so. Now, no talk. Who's goin' to go?"

"I fer one!" announced Bazooka. "I was here first!"

The discussion, however, had become general at once. Rage, despair, disappointment showed on every face. Certain buddies, fast friends, offered to toss coins to see which one would go, but at the end there were still seven who clamored for their rights.

Sergeant Munn blew his whistle. "Listen, you calliopes! Now listen to this! I'm older than you, I been through wars before, and foreign towns, too. Now you take my word, there's nothin' to it. In the first place, there ain't no restaurants in these lousy towns, and if there was there wouldn't be anythin' to eat in 'em. The krauts drunk up all the vino long



ago. Didn't I talk with Sergeant Lucas outta the Reconnaissance about it yesterday? What can yuh buy? Nothin', nothin' but fish, an' rotten fish at that. An' if you do go, an' yuh eat this rotten fish, that may give you typhus an' gut-ache an' everythin'. Think of your buddies back here at camp, sittin' here all day eatin' C-rations and biscuits because you was such a hog you would go on pass, whether it was proper or not."

"So what?" inquired the audience. "It's our own guts, ain't it? Ain't we got a right to a pass? Didn't the order say so? So what?"

SERGEANT MUNN folded his arms with exaggerated patience and, leaning back against the tent pole, waited for silence. When all were quiet he spoke again.

"What a bunch of clucks!" he scoffed. "Now listen. What would you rather do—go on pass now, to some little bitty stinkpot of a town an' lose your place on the list, an' then when we get to Naples or Rome or some *real* place, be way down on the list an' not go, or would you pass up your pass now an' stay home today, an' then next Sunday go to a better place? For the chow, and gettin' away from the C-ration for a meal, me an' Sergeant Lucas have an idea. We're goin' fishin' in a boat we got, an' we'll bring home enough fish so all of the outfit can have a fish-fry tonight; a real one, with beach bonfire an' spuds an' onions, an' maybe somethin' to wash it down, an' no MP's to throw us in the sneezer if we get to singin' a little. Now don't that sound better? Ain't that a reasonable thing to do?"

Silence fell. At last a man who wore the chevrons of a technician fourth grade rose, stretched and made as if to depart. "I get it," he said over his shoulder. "No pass, so why the malarkey? Why'nchuh just say 'no pass'? Sa'right with me—my pants ain't got no seat to 'em anyway. C'mon, Pete, let's go to sleep." Some half-heartedly made as if to follow.

"No!" said Bazooka firmly. "I want a pass! I ain't had one, an' I want one."

"We ain't goin' to send two-and-a-half tons of a six-by-six truck ten miles with you alone!" roared Sergeant Munn.

"Military vehicles is authorized to transport personnel on pass," quoted Bazooka. "It ain't my fault I'm the only one that's goin'."

"No," said several. "If a truck's gotta take Bazooka, we'll all go."

From the CP tent suddenly projected a head, shaved as clean as a billiard ball. It was Sergeant Lucas of the Reconnaissance, a soldier by occupation, long known as a charmer of galloping dice and a diviner of hole cards. His occult powers led him now and then to discover hidden stores of fermented juice of the grape, and he had a wicked way with widows who were good cooks.

"You wouldn't want to do all your pals out of a fish-fry, would you, Bazooka?" asked Sergeant Lucas. "If you gotta have Sunday off, wouldn't you rather go fishin'? We'll take you with us."

Bazooka looked all around. Against the influence of the first sergeant, appeal was futile. Chief of the kitchen police, director of fatigue details, selector of solitary sentinel posts too near the Jerry lines, Sergeant Munn was a man whose favor was worth more than a Sunday in a mythical town.

"Where'd you get a boat?" demanded Bazooka. "There's a war on."

"Why can't we all go?" interrupted the disappointed soldiers.

"We got a boat," began Sergeant Munn, answering all at once, "but where we got it is a military secret. It will only hold two men, so we can't take you all. Bazooka we can take, accounta that empty conk of his, if we get torpedoed, will act as a lifesaver till maybe somebody comes out from shore an' rescues us."

Near the beach, a short time afterward, the two sergeants and Bazooka Bill descended from a quarter-ton truck and, while Munn and Bazooka unloaded some gas cans, Lucas walked to a slight elevation and looked about him for some time. A beach patrol suddenly appeared, laboring through the sand, helmet straps dangling, perspiration dripping from nose and chin.

"Jeez, it's hot!" the corporal in charge of the beach patrol greeted Lucas. "Say, you guys seen a little boat around here? Made out of a wing pontoon—belongs to the Amphibious Engineers. Reconnaissance boat. Got adrift, they claim; asked us to look for it."

"No, we ain't seen it," said Sergeant Lucas.

"Guess it's gone out to sea," panted the corporal. "Well, don't do no fishin', boys, an' no swimmin'; both forbidden. Orders. Well, see yuh 'round." The corporal and his patrol labored away, their woolen shirts as wet as though they had been swimming themselves.

Sergeants Munn and Lucas, as soon as the patrol was out of sight, rushed to the mouth of a small creek nearby, threw off some brush and clumps of beach grass, and began piling the gas cans into a small slate-colored boat that had been hidden there.

"You got enough gas there to take us home to the States!" admired Lucas. "That ought to last us all day; get a good mess o' fish!"

"It's the gas the Old Man rationed out for the six-by-six to take the boys on pass to town," explained Munn. "If I hadn'ta talked 'em outta the idea, we couldn't have had no fishin' party."

"Yeah, that mugg of a Bazooka nearly ruined it. Now, what the hell has he got in his hand?"

Bazooka, holding the seat part of an armchair in one hand, was examining the strange boat with great interest.

"This is the engineer boat," he observed. "You guys stole it!"

"The word 'stole,'" reproved Munn, "is never used in the Army. 'Borrowed' is the word. Whaddyuh doin' with that chair back?"

"I gotta have my comfort," said Bazooka. "I brung it along so it wouldn't get borrowed while I was fishin'. Souvenir; Mussolini sat in it once. I'm sick of sittin' on water cans—I like a seat with a back."

"How d'yuh know Mussolini sat in it?" demanded Lucas.

"Well, how d'yuh know he didn't?"

Bazooka craned his neck. The boat's narrow interior interested him. It was obviously a wing pontoon from a flying boat. "That's a half-track motor," he announced. "Say, this is some boat!" He indicated a large pane of reinforced glass set into the bottom of the boat forward of the motor. "What's the window for?"

"To see the fish," explained Lucas. "The engineers use this thing to scout beaches lookin' for mines an' stuff; got a underwater exhaust. Shove her off, Munn, an' let's get outta here."

"I ain't goin' fishin' with an armchair," announced Munn. "Put that thing down! The boat's too small, anyway; it's overcrowded with three of us without takin' along a houseful of furniture."

Bazooka calmly put his armchair (less legs) on the stern of the boat, sat himself in it and waved his hand. "Take off," he said. "I c'n sit here an' dangle my feet. I'll be outta the way; act as lookout. Me an' my comfort go together, or I go home an' tell the boys where you got the gas for this here outing!"

"Yah, yah, it's better that way; keep him off the window," said Lucas with haste. "Let's go, Munn, turn her over." The motor thundered and the boat slid gaily out to sea, leaping from wave-crest to wave-crest like a surfboard.

ONCE well off shore, where the Sicilian coast was but a low line of dunes, Lucas took his stand over the glass bottom forward and conned the boat slowly to the southwest. Munn joined him and, heads together, they watched the white sea bottom slip past them. "There's a rock shoal off here, where we was yesterday," said Lucas, "an' they bite as fast as you can drag 'em in. There was a macaroni farmer tellin' me. Water's awful clear here; we got a couple hundred feet under us, I'll betcha."

Aft, the song that Bazooka had been intoning came suddenly to an end. The sergeants, intent on their inspection of the sea bottom, paid no attention. Bazooka, anyway, was beneath their notice.

"Hey, you guys!" came Bazooka's calm voice. "Doncha know it's agin orders to go swimmin'? Pretty far out, too. Want a tow?"

Lucas looked forward, put the wheel over a point or two, then peered through the glass bottom. The boat lurched violently.

Bazooka, holding the seat of an armchair, was approaching the strange boat. "What the hell is he bringing along?" exclaimed Sergeant Lucas.

"Gimme your hand," yelled Bazooka.

Lucas and Munn recovered themselves from the gunwale, where the lurch of the boat had thrown them, and gurgling curses, started aft. The boat lurched violently again, and again the two sergeants were thrown against the bulwark. But the second time they recovered themselves, they made no further move. Bazooka was just dragging a dripping man over the side and helping him from the stern into the bottom of the boat, where he collapsed beside a second stranger.

"Swum out too far," explained Bazooka. "Guess they was scared the shore patrol would get 'em."

The two sergeants looked at their new passengers. Lucas cocked a hasty eye overside to see how much freeboard the boat had lost with the additional weight. Munn, meanwhile, had swept his eyes over the newcomers' khaki uniforms, their long baggy trousers, gathered at the ankles, the wings on the right breasts of their tunics, and their sunburned dripping faces rough with a two-day beard. Between

the two lay a rubber object that seemed to be a life preserver. Munn raised his eyes to Bazooka and opened his mouth to speak, but Bazooka, eyes suddenly wide, leaped from his armchair to the bottom of the boat.

"Krauts," he yelled. "Hey, prisoners! They're krauts, two kraut fliers! Don't I know, I captured 'em! I got 'em in the boat!"

Once more, the three men on their feet went into the scuppers with the wild heave the boat gave, almost capsizing. Half a wave at least came aboard over the starboard bow and sloshed aft. Lucas, cursing, scrambled forward on all fours to seize the wheel and get the boat headed to sea again, while Munn snatched a collapsible canvas bucket and began to bail with frantic haste. Between two sweeps of the bucket he struck Bazooka with all his might, following it with a kick that cost him another fall, off balance as he was.

"Get up in that blessed armchair," roared Munn, "an' get your blessed carcass out of the way until I can get some of this blessed water out of this blessed boat, an' then if I don't wring that blessed armchair around your blessed neck then call me a lice-infested son of crime an' punishment!"

Bazooka clambered again onto the pontoon body at the stern and remained there in hurt silence until Sergeant Munn had the boat comparatively dry and Lucas had staunched the blood from a cut over his eyes, so that he could see to get the boat under control.

"You was right, Munn!" said Lucas at last. "I'll say you was right. It woulda been better to stay home an' give up the trip than to bring that dope Bazooka along! Damn near wrecked the boat, split my eyebrow! I'll split somethin' o' his directly I get him ashore!" He turned to glare aft. Bazooka sat in his armchair, his face a white circle against the deep blue sea.

"Don't look now," croaked Bazooka, "but that kraut has got a gun against the gasoline!"

Munn, Lucas and Bazooka observed their new passengers with the fascinated gaze of birds that see a snake approaching their nest. The dripping men were not impressive.

"Just a pair of muggs," commented Bazooka. There was something Germanic about the roundness of their heads, their close-cropped hair, and the blueness of their eyes. The taller of the two was still gasping, sprawled on the bottom of the little boat, but the other was sitting up, back against the gunwale, and in his hand he held a Luger pistol which was pressed against the cans of spare gasoline.

"He took it outta that rubber bag he had when he come aboard," went on Bazooka.

"What did you bounce around like a jumpin' jack an' nearly swamp the boat for?" demanded Munn. "You dope!"

"I seen him drag out that gat. I got down to take it away from him, so Sergeant Lucas gets tough. I only done what I was told."

"Git down an' take it away from him now!" snapped Lucas.

But, when Bazooka stretched a cautious foot toward the bottom of the boat, the German indicated with the pistol that Bazooka was to remain where he was. He then, with gestures, emphasized by short jabs of the pistol that the boat was to be headed seaward. Munn and Lucas, forward at the wheel, could but comply.

"God help you, Bazooka," called Munn over his shoulder, "when we git you ashore again! You pulled them two muggs in!"

"I couldn't see what they had on," protested Bazooka. "You an' Lucas was takin' up all the room at the window. Why didn't yuh holler to me they was German legs down there?"

THE boat continued to head for the open sea. From time to time, one sergeant or the other would steal a cautious glance over his shoulder to observe the Germans, but the one with the pistol never seemed to be off his guard, and his tall companion grew stronger by the minute, to the point where he was at last able to get to his knees and peer cautiously over the gunwale.

Bazooka, isolated on the afterdeck in his armchair, clinging to the cowling to hold himself in place, cast despairing glances about the horizon. Had the sea ever seemed more desolate? Not a ship in sight, not a feather of smoke. Here, where two short weeks before an armada had swarmed, where cargo boats, landing craft, transports and ships of war had been like water-bugs on a summer pond, was desolation. Still, there must be some ship, a patrol boat of some kind that would see them, to whom they might signal for aid.

"You speak English?" Munn demanded of the prisoners.

Both shook their heads. The one with the pistol took a cautious peek and, seeing that the shoreline was almost below the horizon, indicated with his pistol that the boat's course should be changed to parallel the coastline to the northwest. Seaward, to the south, heat and the dust borne from Africa by the sirocco, began to raise a darkish haze from the water.

"They can't go anywhere," began Munn. "They're fliers, I bet. Been shot down an' been floatin' around since last night. But where they takin' us to?"

"Got me," shrugged Lucas. "Sicily ain't been policed up as much as all that yet. Maybe they know a hideout."

"What'll they do with us, take us prisoner?" demanded Munn.

"Not me," replied Lucas. "The first GI soldier I set my eye on, I let out a blast like an air alarm."

"If you had let us all go on pass," observed Bazooka, "this wouldn't have happened."

The day wore on. The heat increased. The

boat continued its westerly course. Twice they passed other craft, a crash-boat even, but none paid any attention, nor did the three Americans dare signal. One blast of that pistol into the spare gasoline and all earthly troubles were over. The German might not have the courage to blow himself up, too, but then again he might.

"Everybody sees us thinks we're fishin'. They see three Americans, especially Bazooka cocked up there in that armchair. There ain't so harmless a lookin' thing in the world as an armchair, so no one gives us a thought. So long as them krauts hide behind the gunwale, no one knows they're here."

Lucas' estimate was full of despair.

"You an' me stand to lose our stripes, Lucas," consoled Munn, "helpin' prisoners to escape. Even if they *do* turn us loose, we won't dare to come home."

Excitedly, the tall German spoke. A destroyer, bow on, had suddenly emerged from the haze and was heading directly toward the little boat. The other German scrambled to his knees for a look.

At once Bazooka shot from his chair, both feet landed on the deck and the boat lurched violently, throwing the German with the pistol on his face. In the same second Bazooka had swung his chair upon the prostrate man's skull.

"Look out!" yelled Lucas. "By God, you'll wreck us yet!"

He frantically flung his weight in the other direction. Munn went off his feet, banging his head against the gunwale. The tall German flung himself at Bazooka, and from a tangle of arms and legs a pistol curved upward and overboard. Bazooka was down, the tall German on top. Lucas hurled himself on the heap.

"Grab the wheel!" he gurgled. "Grab the wheel! I'll hold these krauts down or they'll have us upside down." His arm rose and fell like a flail, alternately on the tall German and on Bazooka.

It was some time before the boat was on its course again and Bazooka was allowed to rise. Then Lucas had to shut off the motor. The destroyer had come up, blowers wheezing, and lay there alongside. From her deck, a sailor covered the boat with a sub-machine gun.

"Aboard the boat!" spoke the destroyer's loud-hailer in a great gruff voice. "Where are you going?"

Munn and Lucas consulted hastily. Sullenly, the two Germans folded their arms.

"We got some prisoners," shouted Bazooka. "Takin' 'em to camp."

The wheezing of the destroyer's blowers, and the fearful voice of her loud-hailer, made her seem like some great living sea-beast panting there.

"I'll pass you a line," spoke the loud-hailer. "We're lookin' for that boat. The Amphibious Engineers reported it stolen."

A line whipped through the air, was caught by Sergeant Lucas and made fast. Hand over hand, he hauled in the boat until it lay under that great steel flank.

A naval officer in khaki looked down from the destroyer's bridge. "Where are you going with that boat, soldier?"

In the boat, three faces looked up, the two sergeants and the tall prisoner. Bazooka, chair on shoulder, still stood over the other prisoner, holding the gunwale with one hand as the boat rose and fell.

"We come out," said Lucas, "to pick up these guys. Suspicious objects. We seen 'em floatin'

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around, we did. They're fliers, German fliers."

"That boat has been gone two days," growled the naval officer. He removed the megaphone through which he had been speaking and addressed someone on the bridge. Sailors came from the interior of the destroyer and clustered at the rail.

BOP! "Lie down, you!" shrilled Bazooka. He chopped again with his chair.

"Lay offa him!" roared Lucas. "He's killin' that prisoner," he yelled to the destroyer. "Hey, don't hit him like that. They need him for identification."

"I don't need to identify him," said Bazooka. "He's a kraut. I seen plenty of 'em!"

The naval officer projected his megaphone over the bridge screen again. "We'll take those prisoners off your hands. Come aboard."

Munn and Lucas exchanged glances. Theirs was an engineer boat, no denying it, and explanation of how it had come into their possession would be difficult. The least they would get out of the affair would be the loss of their stripes. Bazooka thought of a period of seclusion in a barbed-wire enclosure.

"We gotta get this boat back," called Bazooka, still with one eye on the prisoner. "We borrowed it from a kind man on the beach."

"Heave the prisoners up!" spoke the megaphone. "We'll take care of them. You're too deep in the water with five men in that boat."

"You take the prisoners," suggested Lucas, "an' we'll take the boat right back. If it's been gone that long the Engineers will sure be needing it."

"You give us a receipt for 'em an' you can have 'em," added Munn. "We got to have somethin' to clear ourselves, the boat bein' stole, like you say. My, my, who'da thought that!"

More consultation on the bridge. A boarding net slammed over the destroyer's side and two sailors swarmed halfway down. The transfer of the prisoners to the deck of the destroyer was begun.

"What name you want on that receipt, soldier?" queried the officer.

"Just make it out in blank—received two prisoners, you know."

"Hey!" protested Bazooka. "Who took them two krauts? Who pulled 'em outta the water? If it hadn't been for me, you an' Sergeant Lucas would've got shot. Besides, where do I come off in this deal?"

"Yuh want *him*, too?" Sergeant Munn addressed the destroyer, pointing to Bazooka. "Because if yuh do, yuh can have him, armchair an' all."

To Bazooka he growled, "Shut up you! Yuh want 'em to know who we are an' turn us in for stealin' this boat?"

A sailor clambered down the net, handed the receipt for the prisoners to Munn, then scampered up again, and the net was hauled after him. Imperceptibly, the destroyer slid away backwards, then was gone, away to the bank of haze from which she had emerged. A bucket of spray bounced over the boat's gunwale.

"This receipt is goin' to get wet!" cried Munn. "Lucas, we'll git a commission outta this, you an' me. Didn't I think fast to ask for a receipt? How'm I goin' to keep it dry?"

"Put it in that rubber bag the kraut had his gun in," suggested Lucas. "Well, back we go to the fishin' grounds. Half a day wasted all accounta that dopey Bazooka!"

Either the current had turned the wrong way, or the day had grown too hot, or the fish were not feeling well, for there were no bites. Long searching, while Lucas and Munn peered through the plate-glass bottom forward, brought no success. Bazooka, meanwhile, trailing a line astern while the boat had loafed from one rock ledge to the next, had hauled in three fish, which the two sergeants viewed with disdain.

"I bet they ain't fit to eat," said Munn. "I never seen a fish like that before. I'd throw 'em back again."

"He caught somethin', that's more than we have," muttered Lucas. "Doggone it, we got to go home. I want to get shut o' this boat about as quick as possible."

Munn shot Bazooka a glare. "You jonahed this trip," he growled. "We can't catch no fish because we lay too deep. Too many people in the boat—the fish can see us. You and your armchair! Give us another half hour, Lucas, an' I'll catch yuh a whale."

Lucas, however, headed the boat's bow toward the distant shore. Significantly, he held up his crossed fingers, then tapped the wooden gunwale. "We're a long ways from home," he said, "an' there's a war on." He opened the throttle so that the speed of the boat increased.

Behind them, the setting sun kindled the African dust cloud into a golden flame as it slid westward and downward. The low hills grew nearer, with the white sand below them. The ruined tower that marked their beach stood out from its background, then the boat rounded the point and entered the little bay.

"Jeez!" croaked Munn. "Shut her down. Who's that on the beach—all of them GI's?"

"Why, it's the company!" cried Bazooka. "I know them guys! Why, sure!"

Lucas turned in dismay to Sergeant Munn. "Yuh know what them dogfaces are after?" he gasped. "Fish! Didn't you talk 'em outta goin' on pass so we could go fishin'? Now you got to explain why we ain't caught no fish."

But Sergeant Munn had already crouched below the gunwale, hiding himself the way the German prisoners had done. "You tell 'em," he replied. "It's your boat."

Lucas almost dropped the wheel as he turned in angry protest. Then he swallowed his words, gulped, and turned aft.

"Bazooka," began Lucas in sugary tones, "you saved our life today a coupla times. Bazooka, you're the most popular GI I ever run into in fifteen years o' service. Look, we ain't got enough fish to feed all them dogfaces, but yuh can't reason with 'em, you know—they ain't got no savvy. Now, look, they ain't seen us yet. You take the wheel, an' you go in, like you had the boat alone, an' tell 'em it was against orders to fish, the MP's told us so. Me and Sergeant Munn, see, we've gone 'round the point on foot, fishin'. So they go home, see? An' we stay here an' fry them three fish you caught. I got a fry pan I borrowed off the mess sergeant. Get it?"

"I get it," agreed Bazooka. He got down from his armchair and walked forward to take the wheel. Lucas at once lay down.

"Come aft, Munn," ordered Lucas. "Crawl here beside me, git your weight astern. Bazooka, when you want the boat to stop, pull that handle there—that throws out the clutch."

THE boat approached the beach, weaving a little under Bazooka's inexperienced hand. Lucas, stretching his head until he could see through the glass bottom, watched the beach shoal. The water was about six feet deep.

"Pull the clutch, Bazooka," he whispered. Slowly, the boat slid to a stop. A ringing cheer greeted her from the shore.

"Come on in, Bazooka!" shrieked unseen voices. "That's the ole fisherman! Bring her in, boy. We're hungry! Been waitin' on yuh!"

Bazooka was seen by the prostrate sergeants to hold up his hand. "Now listen, fellers," he began, "sorry to disappoint yuh, but it's against orders to go fishin'. The beach patrol told us so, so we ain't got no fish, that is, not yet. You see—" But a howl of rage interrupted.

"You illegitimate——!" came a clear voice. "I give up my pass so you could go fishin'. We know all about where you got your gas, too."

"There ain't any fish in this ocean, anyway," stoutly replied Bazooka. "Boys, I ain't Neptune. We just made what the Old Man calls a faulty estimate."

"You, you son!" roared another voice. "You got *your* boat ride out of it! Let him have it, boys!" A wild roar.

"Hey, cut it out!" protested Bazooka. He hurled himself to the bottom of the boat.

There followed a cloud of rocks, hurled from the shore by the irate soldiers. Some splashed alongside, others bounced on the decking of the boat. One drew a grunt of pain from Sergeant Munn, but the last, a huge dornik curved beautifully into the pane of glass, which descended in fragments to the bottom of the sea. The sea surged in through the hole, and the boat promptly followed the glass.

When the three survivors had sputtered ashore, the beach and the adjoining hinterland were deserted. "Gee!" marveled Bazooka. He laid down his chair and, wading back into the sea, retrieved the rubber bag in which the prisoner had carried his pistol.

"Now where did them guys go?" Lucas dashed the water from his face. He looked overhead and hastily about the horizon. "There's a war on," he muttered. "They run from something—they was scared all right. Wouldn't it be fun to get a tank attack right now, an' our boat at the bottom of the drink!"

"An' even the fish lost!" raged Sergeant Munn. "Bazooka, you dope, I told you to pacify them gorillas, not to get 'em wild! Gimme that chair!" The sergeant seized the chair and, walking to a nearby rock, beat it to fragments.

"Hey!" protested Bazooka. "Whadduhya doin' to my comfort? I lost my pass today account o' you, an' now you go breakin' up my chair!"

Sergeant Munn waved his hand about the desolate fields, strewn with rocks and low, coarse shrubbery. "There's no wood," he explained. "*I* aim to build a fire to dry myself."

Lucas, however, gravely took the first sergeant's arm. "Nix," he advised. "I don't like it. C'mon, we go underground, where the boat was hid. C'mon now, Munn, before somebody starts pitchin' gondolas at us. Them dogfaces didn't run to see how good their wind was!"

"But not that sonofagun Bazooka!" raged Sergeant Munn. "Not him in no foxhole o' mine. He'd lure every kraut plane between here and Germany right in on top of us. G'wan, you, git outta here before I smack you down into this sand right up to your neck!"

In two bounds the sergeants were in the shelter of the little creek, comparatively safe from prowling enemy planes, and temporarily, at least, protected against enemy tanks. Hastily, they pulled the brush camouflage over their heads, then took up positions of observation.

Bazooka sadly gathered the fragments of his beloved chair into a little heap, then thoughtfully stuffed some dried seaweed into the pile. Slowly, searchingly, he looked around, then, without rising from his knees, opened the rubber sack and took out a sheet of paper.

"Oh, my bag!" shrieked Sergeant Munn. "The rubber bag the jerry had his gun in! My receipt! My receipt for the prisoners!"

He surged from the creek bed, but Lucas seized him and dragged him back. "Here it comes, looka! The MP's! No wonder the GI's run!"

A platoon of "peeps," quarter-ton trucks, surged into sight around a knoll, slithered down to the beach and stopped. A number of blue-brassarded Military Police got out of the vehicles, then from another car

appeared three officers. "Jeez," husked Munn, "the Old Man!" The two sergeants could hear every word, for the officers spoke with military clearness, so as to be heard in the next county.

"Here, you, Bazooka, what are you doing here?" roared the company commander, he who had been designated by Munn as "the Old Man."

Bazooka turned out a mild and inoffensive salute. "Sir, I was washin' my clothes. Simplest way, accounta we ain't got no soap, and hot water's so scarce. I just wear 'em into the water an' that soaks off the dust—"

"Have you seen anything of a boat?" barked the Old Man. "This Engineer officer here has lost a boat and he thinks someone in my company stole it. Know anything about it? You heard anything about anybody in my company having a boat?"

"We got a radio from Division," the listening sergeants heard the Engineer officer say, "that some soldiers in a boat had picked up two German fliers, hot customers. One of them is a full colonel in the Luftwaffe, and the commanding general wants their names so he can give them proper credit. The Navy reported it, but they didn't know the men's names. The soldiers' names, that is. Now if you know where they are, they'll get medals, and—or—promotion. Maybe both. Very meritorious act."

Bazooka knelt again and blew on the reluctant seaweed under the fragments of his chair. "Just buildin' a fire, sir, to dry off. Now about a boat, I know where there's a boat, a wrecked one. I seen it while I was washin' my clothes. It's just out there about fifteen-twenty feet."

"A boat?" demanded the Engineer officer. "What kind of a boat? Wood, rubber, what's it like?"

"It looks like a ol' wing pontoon," said Bazooka. "I think it was a piece of a airplane, but you can see the motor—the water's clear you know."

"Humph," growled the MP officer. "Probably drifted away."

"Well, I'll send the truck over and drag it out of there," said the Engineer officer. "Maybe we can salvage the motor. Thanks a lot, Captain. I'd still like to get my hands on the perverts who stole it. I saw 'em, I tell you. It was dark, but by God, if my gun hadn't jammed they'd have been cold turkeys now! They were tankers, too, I could tell by that blessed triangular shoulder patch they wear!"

"Sure, sure," comforted the Old Man, "but they weren't my boys. My boys wouldn't steal anything. We haven't had a complaint traced to my outfit since I've been in command of it!"

They remounted their vehicles, but at the last the Old Man came back and spoke briefly to Bazooka, then he leaped to his peep and the cavalcade bounced away over the barrens.

The two sergeants came out when all was clear again. Bazooka now warmed his wet legs at a brisk fire.

"What'd the Old Man say?" demanded Lucas. "What'd he say to you in your ear when he came back just now?"

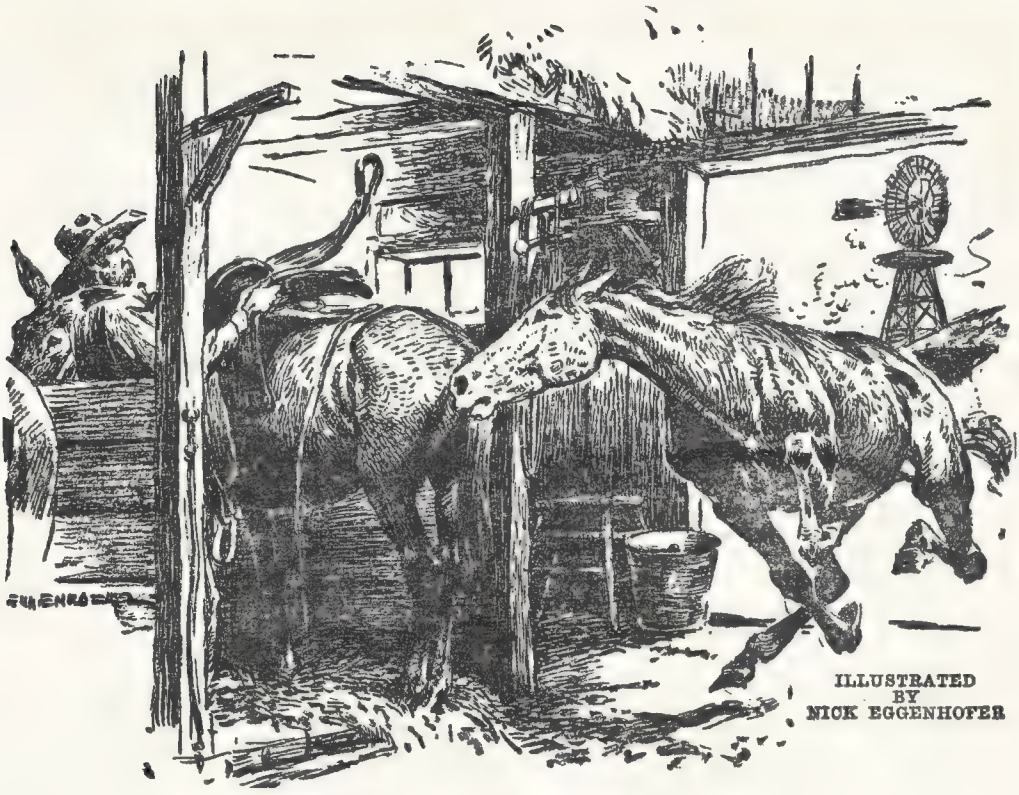
"Huh? He said that just in case by any chance we was the parties that fished them two jerries out of the drink not to make no further mention of it. The Navy could have 'em and welcome."

"What didja do with that receipt for the prisoners?" demanded Sergeant Munn, rummaging in the empty rubber sack. "You take it outta here?"

"I used it to light the fire with," said Bazooka. "You was yellin' you needed a fire to dry off. What good's the receipt if you can't show it?"

The first sergeant ground his teeth. "A'right, smart guy!" he announced. "So t'morrow, Monday, you do some jive on the pots an' pans, with special attention to diggin' a new garbage pit."

"Naw," said Bazooka. "The Old Man give me the day off fer savin' the company's honor. He said a soldier that was intelligent enough to sink that boat before the Engineers caught him with it could have a pass to go to town. I aim to buy me another chair back."



ILLUSTRATED BY NICK EGGENHOFER

A gray streak shot in through the door and just about knocked that poor mule off his feet.

HORSE-SENSE

A Fact Story

By JOHN RICHARD YOUNG

THE Old-Timer slid his feet out of his moccasins and wiggled his toes luxuriously. After a twelve-hour working day on horseback, wearing tight riding boots, it feels even better to relax in the evening than a man approaching seventy will sometimes admit.

Tilting his chair, The Old-Timer crossed his socked feet on the veranda railing and with deft, rope-calloused fingers rolled a smoke. He sat silent for a while, watching the purple gray shadows of dusk crawl out of the prairie hollows and, like a ghostly horde of Indian marauders, creep across the rolling rangeland toward the ranch-house. His cigarette burned down to a brown-stained butt before at last he spoke.

I seen a piece in the paper here recent (The Old-Timer said) where one of them college-trained Army officer vets over to Fort Riley was lecturing the rookie cavalrymen on how to treat a horse or mule. A horse or a mule, says he, ain't a reasoning animal at all. They're just a bundle of instincts and reflexes. You do this, says he, and the horse or the mule will do that. Just like pushing a button to start a machine, another one to stop it and a third to reverse it. Says he! Now that young feller, like enough, knows all about a horse's or mule's physical side, but I know damn well he ain't got much horse-sense himself.

I've lived on and with horses for fifty years I've broke and rode thousands of broncs, of all breeds and dispositions, and I've run into

plenty of dumb ones—almost as many as I've met among the human breed. But no one can tell me that the average horse hasn't a heap of horse-sense, often a lot more than some of the two-legged jackrabbits who try bossing him and like to look down on him as a poor dumb brute.

Horses do reason, and they have a sense of humor, too, and a sense of fair play. Some horses are very patient and long-suffering under abuse, but they *know* they are being mistreated, and sooner or later will do something about it. Others, like hot-tempered men, are quicker to resent abuse. They're the ones that usually turn into outlaw killers.

In the old days here we specialized in husky, draft-bred bronc chunks that we sold to the fool hoe-men over in the Valley. When we gathered them in, them broncs were, usually, as wild as deer. We'd throw them into a large pasture where they'd have to come to a tank at the windmill for water and salt. Them broncs were so spooky and so big and tough that the job of gentling them just *had* to be done gradual. One of our best kindergarten gentling methods was the mosquito smudge.

Whenever the country was not scorched to dust by the hot winds, mosquitoes came in thick swarms that just about drove us, men and horses, plumb loco. The 'skeeters were small, but they made up in number and activity what they lacked in size. So we'd haul big piles of old wet hay to a narrow coulee in the pasture where the new broncs were and we'd light smudges.

Broncs that had been in the pasture for some time and that we'd left there as decoys or leaders knew that the smudges would be made; they had learned it from the leaders before them. No matter if they was miles away in the farthest corners of the pasture, they would start for the smudges on the run. The newcomers, of course, would trail along after them.

You could always tell when the band was coming. At supper you'd see little ringlike wavelets form in your cup of coffee and become larger and larger. Then a knife would begin to vibrate against a fork or a dish, the dishes would be set vibrating and soon the whole table would be jigging a rapid little tune. Then someone would remark, "Th' hosses is comin'."

Soon you'd hear a sound like distant thunder, growing rapidly louder and louder until it was a pounding roar as the hundreds of hoofs beat in time on the sunbaked earth. Then complete silence.

The horses had come into the smudges. There they would stand as still as statues, swathed in the dense pall of smoke that hung in the coulee, enduring the acrid smudge fumes for the sake of the relief it gave them from the mosquitoes.

AFTER supper we would go out and mingle with the horses, talking low and gentle to them, never making a threatening move, adding more fuel to the smudges, wetting down a flaming spot. That sure had a good effect on those broncs. They savvied that we had built the smudges and didn't aim to harm them. Raw green broncs which the day before would not have let a man get within roping distance would submit to a gentle hand being laid on their backs and would even move over in response to a light slap and a low word of command.

I have often watched my horses in winter feeding on the snow-covered sides of high *coteaus*. I could always pick out the smart ones and the jugheads. At the top of the hill the broncs would string out in a ragged line, each horse having about two yards of elbow-room between himself and the horses on either side of him. Then they would start pawing away the snow to get at the cured buffalo grass. Pawing and backing, they would work right down the side of the *coteau* until they reached the bottom. Then they'd all march up again and repeat.

In feeding like this, they spraddled their hind-legs some so as not to pack the snow where their front hoofs would paw; and in going back up the hill the smart ones were always careful to walk only in the pawed trail so as not to trample the fresh snow they hadn't worked over yet.

Now how in hell did they figure that out, if horses "can't reason"? Cattle won't do this, not even the old longhorn, the smartest cow-critter there ever was. You can't lay it to mere instinct, because some of the broncs wouldn't do it, or did it very clumsily, not spraddling their hindfeet and not having sense enough to walk back up the hill in the trail they had just pawed down. Those dumb ones were the broncs that always turned out to be the jugheads you could never teach anything to.

Son, horses are individuals, just like men and women. No two are exactly alike. They all have a certain degree of pride. They have social instincts and recognize degrees of excellence. In matching up teams I often had horse character impressed on me in some plumb surprising ways.

Pair a lazy horse with a willing one and you have a bad team. The willing one will often turn and bite the lazy nag, trying to make him do his share. Sometimes the good horse will be able to bring the poor one up to his own level. If not, he may degenerate himself. Usually, in time, they strike a medium.

I often drove a horse and a mule to a platform springwagon. Why, people often asked me did I drive such a mixed team when I had several mules and thousands of horses? I drove

'em together simply because that horse and that mule were exceptional teammates. They were great pals. They traveled very evenly at a small rate and seemed tireless. Their combined intelligence was plumb amazing.

For example, our range in them days had no graded roads or bridges. When we came to a place of water and mud where it was a question of whether we could pull through or would have to go around, I'd leave the decision squarely up to the team. I have watched them debate such a question many times. They never decided wrong.

The mule, having smaller hoofs, was inclined to be timid of certain bottoms and less timid of others than the horse. If they decided that they could both make it, they would start in of their own accord and always get through. If they turned aside, I did not argue their decision. With any other team I probably would have used my own judgment.

There was always the matter of when to speed up, when to slack, and even when and how long to stop for a breathing spell. I let the team decide themselves. Never once did they take advantage of me.

That pair learned from each other. A mule, you know, will never founder itself by eating or drinking when too hot or too tired; a horse may. Well, that mule taught the horse when to eat and drink and when not to.

The mule was plumb scared of prairie fires; the horse had an uncanny judgment of them. So when we came to a fire between us and our objective, the mule and I let the horse decide whether to bolt through or go around.

The horse was a fine swimmer; the mule was not. So the mule took swimming lessons from the horse. I'm not exaggerating. I have swum that team across a lake more than half a mile wide. Roads didn't mean a thing to us. We headed in a certain direction and we went.

I HAD a favorite pacer I used a lot for roping and shooting. He was a roundly-built dappled gray, weighing about 1,050 in good hard flesh, almost pure Hambletonian. I called him Billy. Son, that pacer could think better than some men I've known.

I hunted prairie chicken with an Irish setter named Red, or ran wolves and jackrabbits with a mixed pack of staghounds, grayhounds and shepherds. Galloping after the pack, Billy would undertake to jump anything he could see over or around, but that devil simply would not jump anything on the run. No, sir! He had to stop first and look things over. Then he'd start squatting and gathering himself and suddenly—*whoosh!*—over he'd go, his four feet bunched like a jackrabbit's.

Sometimes he'd fail to clear an obstacle in one jump and never was very successful in clearing it in two. So once in a while we landed too soon. But Billy would scramble or swim the rest of the way, turn around on the other side, look it over, snort, shake his head, pivot on his hind feet and off we'd go again after the hounds. Once he didn't shake his head; he just looked things over. Before I realized what he was up to, he'd jumped back and made it. He was as pleased as a boy with a new pair of boots. I wasn't.

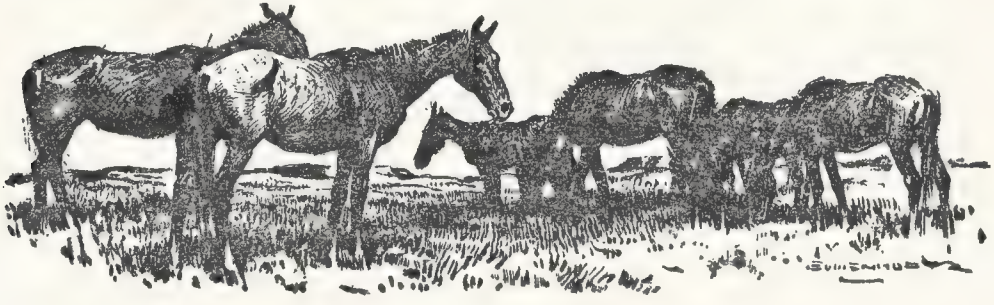
"Damn it to hell!" I said. "Can't you see the bank is higher on the other side?"

I reckon Billy had realized that the instant he jumped back, because instead of rejumping he galloped down-creek a ways, found an easier place and cleared it by feet. Then he fogged after the hounds with his ears drooping. He never tried that stunt again.

When a pacer is traveling steadily at his favorite gait there comes a time when, to rest himself, he sort of switches his stride from his left legs to his right, or vice versa. It is hard to explain clearly unless you are familiar with the smooth, shuffling riding-pace, the easiest, most comfortable gait for a rider to sit. Anyhow, this abrupt switch is called "getting in his fifth leg," and if the rider happens to be asleep or drowsing in the saddle the jar sure wakes him up sudden.

Whenever Billy woke me up like this I relieved my feelings with a few choice cuss words. Billy soon caught on to the reason why. So sometimes when I mounted him, if he thought I wasn't in any particular hurry, that horse would start out fifth-legging to beat hell and have a great horse-laugh on me.

(Continued on page 144)



A BET IS A BET

By EDWIN KLEIN

Sgt. A. S. Canarsie, USMC
Co. J, 2nd Marines Reinforced, FMF
c/o F.P.O., San Francisco, Calif.

Dear Mike:

Well, I'm still out here in the Glamorous South Pacific (advt.) and it's the same old routine. I can't say I like it, but on the other hand, I got nothing better to do, and once in a while something funny happens. Like last week. I guess I told you that Wally Jablonski is in my unit. You remember Ski, the big ape who used to play guard for Detroit, and was always running off at the mouth. Same guy. I see quite a lot of him out here—I guess we're buddies, except that we don't like each other very much. Jablonski would doublecross his mother, and he probably has. He almost fixed me up for good last week.

We were spending the weekend in a foxhole about two hundred yards from the Nips, and he was shooting the breeze as usual. Being where we were, there was nothing for me to do but listen or hit him on the head, and you know how good an idea that would be. So I listened.

"Anyway," he was saying, "it don't make sense. None of it makes sense. Here we sit on a chunk of coral for which back home I wouldn't give two bits an acre, and anyway it's so small you could damned near spit from one end of it to the other. First we chase the Nippos all over the place and then they sit down over there and now for five days they don't move. I'm for moppin' up on 'em and gettin' out of here."

I butted in. "Well, the guns are workin' on 'em. They gotta be softened up a little before we go in after 'em."

Ski wouldn't buy it. "Those 105s aren't softening anybody up," he sneered. "They're just tearin' up the brush. They don't know where to shoot. That's the whole trouble. Nobody knows where the rats are."

"You got any bright ideas?" I asked him. "What do you think we ought to do, go over and ask the Nips for a little rice-paper sketch of their set-up?"

"No good, Canarsie," Ski said sourly. "We don't speak the lingo."

"Well, maybe we ought to go over and bring one of 'em back alive—pick him up for questioning, as the cops used to say."

"And how you gonna do that?" Ski asked nastily. "With your bare hands, maybe?"

I was getting a little sore and it interfered with my judgment, I suppose. "Yeah, with the bare hands, maybe," I said.

"You, maybe?"

"Me, maybe."

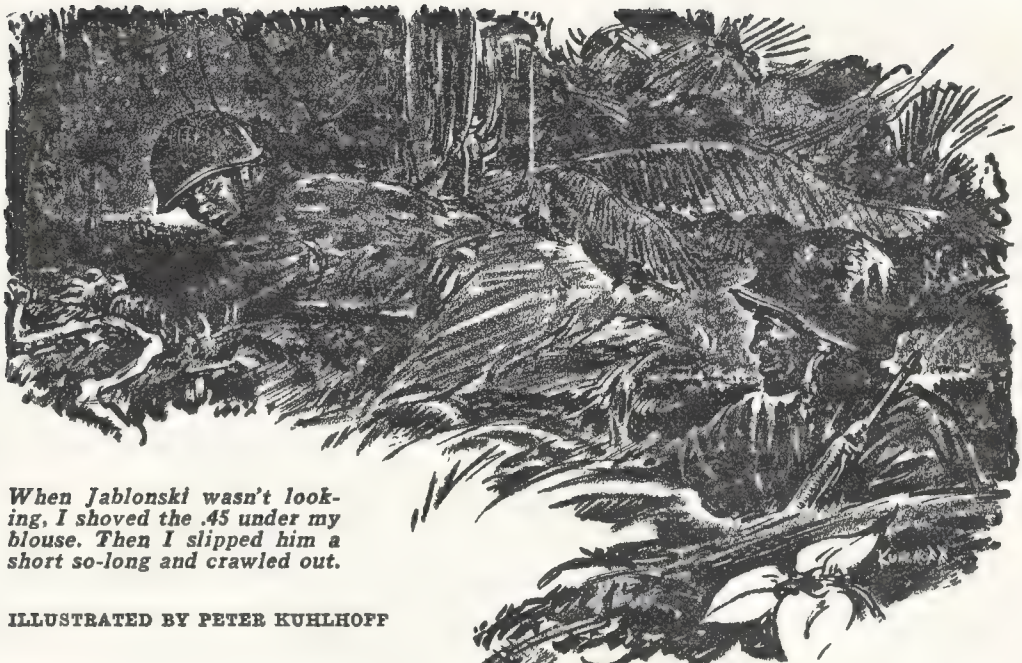
"Ten bucks against my next month's pay you don't."

"You got a bet, sucker," I told him. I was mad enough to try it by then, but I wasn't so mad I was crazy. I hung around for a while, making a big fuss about piling up the knife and automatic I was wearing, and when Jablonski wasn't looking I shoved the .45 into my belt under my dungaree blouse. Then I slipped him a short so-long and crawled out.

I hadn't gone twenty yards before I was willing to forget the whole thing, but I didn't have the guts to go back. So I kept pushing along, as quietly as I knew how. It was as black as a quartermaster's heart out there—the heavy, thick blackness you find only in the jungle. It was also noisy enough to scare you out of a year's growth. And out here you never can tell whether you're listening to a South Pacific hoot-owl or a Jap sniper passing the word along to his little yellow brothers. It took an hour to cover two hundred yards, and then, without even looking around for one, I slid head-first into a Jap foxhole.

It must have been a listening post and I was practically in the Jap's lap before I saw him, all eyes and buck teeth. But I knew what was up and he didn't, and before he could say Yamamoto I clipped him on the jaw. He went down, but not out, which embarrassed me some, but before he could yell I swallowed my pride and belted him good with the barrel of the .45. I hit him so hard I was scared I'd spoiled the merchandise. However, I didn't bother to find out; I gagged him with some mud and a handkerchief and tied his hands. By this time I was sweating because I figured he might have friends dropping in any minute. I slung him over my shoulder—he didn't weigh more than a heavy marching order—and started back.

Things were going as well as you can expect when you're crawling across a battlefield with



When Jablonski wasn't looking, I shoved the .45 under my blouse. Then I slipped him a short so-long and crawled out.

ILLUSTRATED BY PETER KUHLHOFF

a hot Jap on your back, until about fifty yards from our own lines some trigger-happy machine gunner heard me and let off half a belt.

"Hold it!" I yelled. "I'm on your side, Mac!"

"Oh, sure," the guy yells back. "I'm from Yokohama myself." And he lets go another twenty rounds.

But Jablonski knew my voice and he sang out. "It's O.K." he yelled. "That's Canarsie comin' back. Turn it off."

The gun stopped firing, but the Japs were awake and jumping by now, and they opened up with their own MG's. I slid into home plate with the stuff splashing all around me.

I delivered Joe Tojo to the battalion commander in person. He wasn't very grateful, considering all the trouble I'd gone to. He had a lot to say about disobedience of orders and insubordination and not knowing whether to court-martial me or decorate me. Since then he hasn't done either. Finally he cooled down and told me to return to my unit.

I looked up Jablonski and told him the tale, skipping the part about the .45, naturally, and then politely asked him for a chit on his next month's pay. Not that I didn't trust him, but guys who owe me money have a habit of becoming casualties and getting buried or evacuated without paying off.

Ski just smiled in a nasty fashion. "The hell you say, Canarsie," he told me. "You don't get a dime from me."

"Why not, you cheap chiseler?" I asked, making it sound plenty indignant.

"Because the deal was you were to do it bare-handed."

"And I did."

"And you did like hell, wise guy. You took that .45 just like I figured you would." He switched back my dungaree blouse and pulled out the pistol. A dirty grin grew on his big ugly face.

"Not that it would have done you any good, draft-dodger, because look what papa pulled out of your pretty pop-gun before you left." Ski held out his hand, and I damned near passed out. It was the loaded clip for my .45! I'd been out there with an empty gun!

How's that for two-timing? Some Marine, that Ski.

I have to stop now. I've got to go see a guy in Intelligence who's promised to teach me to whisper a few words in genuine Nippo. It's an idea I've got for squaring myself with Jablonski some dark night. I'll let you know how it turns out.

Yours,
Artie

THE LEADER'S

Kulma jumped over the snarling coyotes into the icy river.

PORTION

By

WILLIAM

MARSHALL

RUSH

ILLUSTRATED BY

LYNN BOGUE HUNT

IT was daylight on the sagebrush slope where the prairie came in to join the mountains, but the May sun had not yet broken over the shoulder of glacier-capped Trident Peak. Kulma, the big blacktailed doe, hid her newborn fawns under a yellowbush and walked slowly uphill a hundred yards to graze.

She cropped the succulent herbage hungrily. She was gaunt and weak from the long winter just past and the ordeal of bearing young. It would take a great deal of nourishment to rebuild her body. Besides, the two spotted fawns must be fed until they were old enough to nibble grass and take care of themselves. Food would not be much of a problem for the deer during the next few months. There was always abundance in the summer.

After every few mouthfuls Kulma raised her head to look around. Until the fawns could run swiftly at her side, they were in deadly peril from coyotes, those cunning prairie wolves that invaded the mountains to prey upon the deer herds when the fawns were small. Once the doe thought she saw a gray shadow move on top of the ridge and watched with great eyes fixed on the spot until she was certain it had been a clump of sagebrush bowed by a passing breeze.

She moved away from the fawns another hundred yards. The farther she stayed from them the safer they were. They had no odor. Even the keen, pointed noses of the wild dogs could not detect them. The little ones' spotted coats blended with the light and shadows of sagebrush, the gray soil and brown stones so well that coyotes could not see them. The fawns would not move until their mother came back to nurse them, lying as still as stones, limpid eyes wide open but lashes immobile. They would make no sound, either. As long as Kulma stayed away coyotes had slight chance to find them.

She grazed in a wide circle completely around the spot where she had left her twins. She had kept such close watch over the country that she was sure no coyotes were near. Instead of going directly to the yellowbush, however, she tried one of her oldest ruses, one that had never yet failed to reveal the presence of lurking enemies if there were any about.

She stopped feeding suddenly, raised her head and searched the surrounding terrain for a full minute. Then she walked straight into a small patch of dense sagebrush where only her head and back showed. She stood there for a full hour. If coyotes were hiding in the vicinity they would imagine she was caring for her fawns and come out to attack. Kulma could deal with them very well indeed if she knew her babies were safe.

Finally she decided that it was time to go to the twins. She had to feed them, even though there was a chance she might betray their presence to a bloodthirsty enemy. She slipped through the brush, stopping often to look, listen and sniff the wind for a sign of danger.

She nudged the fawns with her nose, licked their sleek coats and encouraged them to stand on their almost strawlike legs. She forgot the wolves for a little while as she caressed and nursed the wobbly creatures.

A SLIGHT movement, like the shadow of a horned lark flitting over the sagebrush, made her turn her head sharply and focus her telescopic eyes on the spot. There was another movement of gray against the gray-green background, this time a more obvious one. A coyote sat on his haunches, watching her. In spite of all her caution Kulma's most dreaded foe had found her with the defenseless fawns.

She nudged the babies with her muzzle and they sank to the ground, odorless, motionless, without sound. This availed them little, now that a coyote's yellow eyes were on their hiding place. But the game was not over yet. Kulma was quite able to protect herself and her family from one coyote. She sauntered off as if she were completely unaware of his presence and began to nibble at some new growth cinquefoil.

The coyote trotted away a few steps to a slight rise in the ground and again sat down on his haunches. Kulma saw that it was Abalo, the old three-footed coyote and gang leader, sleek, fat and confident. Kulma's muscles stiffened. All the deer hated and feared Abalo. He had stepped into a steel trap when he was only a pup and freed himself in the only way a coyote could, by gnawing off the imprisoned foot. He could not run fast enough to catch rabbits, nor jump quickly enough to grab ground squirrels before they darted into their holes. He could neither dig out any of the ground dwellers nor catch meadow mice as other coyotes did, yet by leading a gang that killed deer he kept his sleek, shining coat and a round full stomach. His super-cunning more than made up for the loss of his leg.

Kulma cropped casually at the grass, edging closer all the time to the gray dog. Her four sharp two-toed hoofs were weapons enough to deal with Abalo. When she was quite near she turned and flew at him like a whirlwind, front feet flailing.

Abalo dodged, but not quickly enough to escape one sharp hoof that caught him across the shoulder, cut a deep gash and sent him rolling. The doe whirled and jumped high to come down with bunched feet. Abalo scrambled desperately for the shelter of a rock just in time to keep from being trampled to death.

Kulma whirled again and this time came down facing the yellowbush where she had left the fawns. Two more gray dogs were slinking toward them from opposite directions.

The doe forgot Abalo and raced toward the coyote nearest her babies. It swerved and darted away with Kulma in hot pursuit. Abalo had planned well. He and the other two had shadowed the doe for the last three hours. A coyote less cunning would have been completely fooled when Kulma stood for an hour in the first clump of brush. Abalo was too wise to be taken in by the trick. And when she finally went to her fawns, Abalo had drawn her attention while the others circled toward the helpless babies. Now all he need do was wait. He had directed the attack. He would leave the dangerous work for the others.

Kulma looked back to see the second coyote sneaking in on the fawns and whirled to chase him. In her fury she went a little too far. Behind her the first wild dog darted in and slashed at one of the fawns. She raced back, too late. The little one was mortally wounded with bright blood spurting from its side.

The doe stood over her babies, eyes turning first toward one gray skulker, then to the other. Off to one side Abalo still sat, waiting. Neither he nor the other two made any further move to harm the deer.

Kulma bent her head and sniffed at the dead fawn. Then she nuzzled the other one until he struggled to his feet. She pressed against his side to encourage him and with short steps edged him away from the spot.

As soon as Kulma was out of the way the coyotes rushed at the dead fawn. Yips of pain came from the two younger coyotes as Abalo drove them back from their kill while he ripped at its belly and tore out the tender liver. That was the leader's portion. Not until he took what he wanted did the other two dare even to touch the carcass.

The wild dogs finished their meal and slunk off over the brow of the hill. Kulma went on until her fawn's frail legs faltered. She stopped for a moment to let him rest, then went on again, a few steps at a time. At the base of a gnarled pine tree she stopped and the little one flopped to the ground. He could go no farther now. Kulma licked his coat for a few moments, then tiptoed away to graze.

Five days later she had edged the fawn into the high mountains. It was strong enough to run a little by that time. Five more leisurely days and it could run fast enough to keep out of a coyote's way. Kulma did not see Abalo again. Somewhere on the slope of Trident Peak he had found other unfortunate victims.

ALL summer and fall the deer were in a paradise of rich fattening grass and weeds that reached to their bellies. They forgot all about coyotes in the peaceful high mountain country but fall snows came early. All the deer moved down from the heights to their ancestral wintering grounds.

A month earlier than usual, winter came in earnest. Snow filled all the low places on the ground level full, drifts piled up in the lee of every shelter and there was a foot of ice-crusted snow on the meadows. There was bare ground only on windswept ridges and hogbacks. The temperature fell far below zero. Arctic winds howled over the land.

By January, the herd of blacktailed deer to which Kulma belonged had cropped practically every blade of grass, every dry weed, every bit of browse from the range. Domestic sheep and cattle had left little for deer to start with.

In February, all the deer showed the effects of woefully short rations. Kulma huddled in a clump of pine trees. She could feel the stirrings of unborn fawns. She was pitifully thin, in no condition to provide them with nourishment until summer brought a new crop of grass and herbs.

The herd moved down to the old beaver meadows, a half mile from Arrow River. There were a dozen, besides Kulma—three bucks without antlers, four does and five yearling fawns.

Little food was left above the snow. A few stubby stems of pale yellow rye grass, a brown brittle stalk of Canada thistle, a stub of yellowbush, a few gnawed stumps of aspen trees were all that could be found, no matter how desperately the deer searched the meadow. White mounds with barkless sticks protruding through the snow marked deserted beaver houses and dams. There was a little swamp grass, but it was tasteless as paper and unpalatable as wood shavings.

There was better forage across turbulent Arrow River. No bands of sheep had been over there to devour every blade of grass, no herds of cattle to eat all the bitterbrush and service berries. Less snow had fallen and more had blown away. Over there Kulma might have a chance to live and rear her fawns.

But Arrow River was wide and swift. Great boulders lined its banks and lay strewn on its bottom. There was ice around the big boulders along the shore, but none that formed a bridge where a deer might walk across. As far as the life-giving weeds and grass were concerned they might as well not have been there. No deer would voluntarily plunge into that ice-bound torrent.

Kulma moved a few steps and stopped to paw at the crusted snow. She lowered her head and scrutinized the ground for food. She nibbled a few wisps of rain-leached, sun-bleached grass and pawed again. This time she got nothing. At the edge of the pines she reared on her hind legs and reached high to gather a twig of needles in her mouth. They were sharp-pointed, tough, and tasted strongly of resin, yet she ate them and reared for another bite.

A coyote's howl ululated from a hill above the meadows, and from another hill the call was answered. All summer long the deer had paid no attention to coyote serenades. There had been no threat in them. Now that the deer were weakened by months of starvation the gray dogs were taking a heavy toll of the herds.

Late that night Kulma was still searching for food. She reared for another twig of pine needles but it was out of reach. She came down on all four feet and began to paw again at the snow. The weird coyote song made her restless. She heard one deep voice more often than the rest. It seemed to signal directions to the others.

There were no clouds and the moon's brilliance was accentuated by millions of frost particles floating in the air. Kulma stopped her fruitless pawing at the snow to face up the slope. She knew that the barking dogs would select only one of the herd and devote all their attention to pulling it down. She knew their cunning teamwork, their devilish certainty.

As she watched, a half score gray forms came down the long, windswept ridge, silent as the moonlight. They deployed for attack and Kulma knew they had marked her for the kill.

Old Abalo was with his gang. He trotted at their heels as if directing the others where to go and what to do. Three of them sat down on their haunches near Kulma. Four hundred yards down the creek two took up stations on either side of the stream. Abalo and the remaining four jogged out of sight down the hill.

Kulma looked at the other deer as they pawed snow and searched for food. It was not deer nature to organize a team and fight their enemies. It was every deer for himself. Until each one's time came, he showed no concern. This was Kulma's time and she could depend upon no help from the others.

The three coyotes waited until their teammates were stationed, then moved on padded toes toward Kulma. There was only one way for her to go, down creek toward the river.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

BUY WAR BONDS!

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Every other way was barred by deep snow whose icy crust would support the lightweight coyotes but would break through with Kulma at every jump, cut her feet with its icy edges and make each bound weaker until she fell exhausted. She must run the way Abalo had gone. It was a gauntlet with foaming, ice-bound Arrow River at the end. If she could reach the river and leap into it, the fanged dogs would not follow. There might be death in Arrow River, but any death was preferable to being torn to pieces by these yellow-eyed dogs.

THE three coyotes were only a few yards from her, one behind, one on either side, when they leaped toward Kulma with mouths agape and wicked white teeth gleaming in the moonlight.

Kulma bounded away, a short leap, then a high long one. Snow was not deep in the beaver meadows. It had been pawed over and trampled by the deer until only a few inches remained. With quick, easy leaps Kulma outdistanced her pursuers.

The two flankers that Abalo had posted kept pace at either side. Kulma gained a little as she followed a packed trail in the snow.

By the time she had run a quarter of the way, she was ahead of her attackers. She had reached the edge of the meadows and the top of a slope which extended all the way to the river. Here running became more difficult. Snow was deeper, there were treacherous rocks and forest litter underneath it, fallen trees to avoid and, worst of all, patches where small springs oozed glaring ice. The wild dogs gained on her.

Kulma shortened her jumps, lessened her speed, stopped to look back. Three gray shapes were close and at either side the two flankers dashed at her. She whirled, bounding squarely into the middle of an icy patch under the snow, slipped, fell heavily and slid into a jagged rock.

Before she could rise the two dogs were upon her, ripping at the fleshy part of her thighs. The pain sent her scrambling frantically to her feet. She fought them off and raced on. Over snow, rocks and fallen logs she made short, safe jumps. When she reached a stretch where the going was better she leaped twenty, thirty, thirty-five feet at a single high bound, landing lightly, as if her legs were finely tempered spring steel, bounding on toward the river.

Kulma was tiring fast but whenever she faltered or slowed, her pursuers closed in to keep her going straight down the hill, almost as if in a groove.

On level shore ice, extending twenty feet back from running water, four coyotes waited. There was snow on the ice and the dogs had trotted back and forth, up river and down river, until they had it well packed. Now they were spaced along a restless line fifteen paces apart. It was their job to leap upon the wounded doe and make the kill.

As Kulma came in sight, the waiting coyotes moved to form a pocket, two in front, one on either side. She was making long bounds on her downhill run. One leap to the only level place in the rocks where a deer could land would take her to where, with one more mighty bound, she could hit the shore ice and go on into the icy water. The coyotes waited on the spot where that leap must take her, to drag her down. There was to be no escape for the doe. Abalo's teamwork was perfect.

Abalo himself crouched behind a small rock, ten feet from the pocket formed by the four coyotes. When the deer went down he would rush in, rip open the belly and claim the leader's portion, as he always did. Hunting had been good during the long cold winter. Deer liver had kept Abalo round and fat. The others might gorge on muscles and bones. Abalo took only the choicest part of the victim.

He did not even look up the slope at the frenzied doe, but at the spot on the ice where he was so sure she must land and be slain. His mouth slavered at thought of the taste of the hot blood.

Kulma saw the four coyotes and saw where she must go. There was neither time to think nor turn aside. Five murderous beasts were at her heels.

When she hit the flat spot among the boulders her muscles were tensed for the final two jumps to the water. A spot of gray, a shadow near a small boulder drew her attention. It moved a little and she saw the stub leg of Abalo sticking out.

In mid-air, Kulma jerked herself half around and came down with all four feet bunched squarely on top of him. Faster than a rattlesnake could strike she jumped again, this time completely over the four waiting coyotes, landed beyond them on the slippery ice and skidded into the water.

The river caught her, tumbled her over, swept her through the boulders downstream. She struggled to the surface, fighting for breath. A cross-current took her into the lee of a rocky point on the far side of the river. Her feet struck bottom and she staggered out on shore.

Behind her on the shore ice, nine coyotes snarled and fought as they tore their crippled master to shreds. This too was the leader's portion, for Abalo could be leader only as long as his nefarious schemes were successful.

After what seemed a long time, Kulma raised her head and looked around her in the white moonlight. Ahead was a dark patch of evergreen ceanothus. She shook the freezing water from her coat and painfully crawled up the bank to crop greedily of its nutritious leaves.

THE TRAIL AHEAD

Lycanthropy, as you all know, is the belief in were-wolves. *Diphyllanthropy*—remember Dracula?—the belief in vampires. In Africa—where there are no wolves—it's *leanthropy*. And that means were-lions.
Back at last from a prolonged tour of duty on the "Dark Continent" the man who knows as much about the secret heart of Africa as any writer living takes us along its hidden jungle trails with Tembo Neal, back-bush envoy extraordinary, to watch the lion-men at their grisly work.

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On Sale December 8th

BELT of STEEL

By

SIDNEY HERSCHEL SMALL

ILLUSTRATED BY FRANK KRAMER

"O.K., boy," whispered the prisoner and Davies lifted his fellow-American and slung him out of the ring.

THE dusk of late summer pressed down on Tokyo, and on the women who were walking slowly along the curved street which led to the temple. Their gray or lavender kimonos, worn threadbare, blended into the evening. They walked in silence. A few old men were in the crowd, and they walked silently also.

Long paper lanterns hung from poles fastened to the shop eaves. Paper bells replaced the little metal ones which formerly had been attached to the bottoms of the lanterns; the tufts of stiff white feathers still ornamented the ends of the poles, not being needed for the melting-pots. The lanterns would have been taken down by children of the shopkeepers, in past years, and been carried to the temple, where

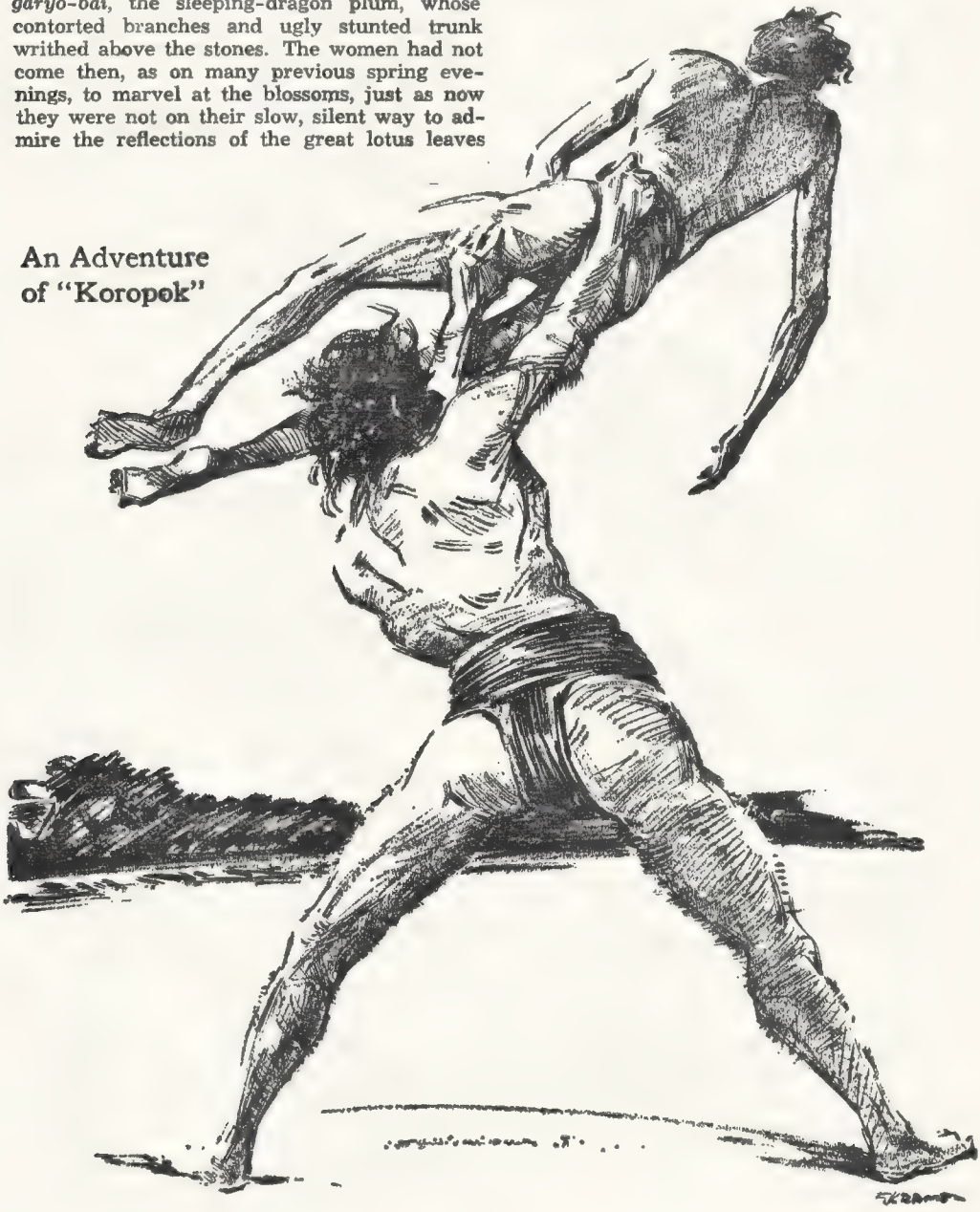
children and parents alike would have prayed for small future happinesses. But now no lanterns could be lit nor carried, lest even such a small firefly gleam attract the attention of what Japan dreaded—the *Amerika-jin* bombers.

Now, too, there were more women on the street than had walked on it toward the temple a few months ago, when the temple courtyard had been white with dropped petals from the *garyo-bai*, the sleeping-dragon plum, whose contorted branches and ugly stunted trunk writhed above the stones. The women had not come then, as on many previous spring evenings, to marvel at the blossoms, just as now they were not on their slow, silent way to admire the reflections of the great lotus leaves and the lotus seed pods in the placid temple pool, nor to watch the carp.

They were coming to pray. For the dead.

And when fall comes, thought the bearded man dressed in the tatters of an Ainu pariah, who shuffled along with the crowd, *they won't be coming to see the turning-red-of-the-maple, either. And there will be more of them coming by autumn, because there'll be more dead Nips.*

An Adventure of "Koropok"



The dark man in the short blue jacket grinned in his beard. The Japanese women were on their way to pray for husbands and sons who had died in battle for the Tenno, the emperor. Each month their number was increasing.

A radio in one of the shops began blaring. "It is impossible to live under the same heaven with the enemy of our lord!" snarled the metallic Japanese announcer; and the people on the street and in the shops dutifully repeated the pledge of the savage forty-seven Ronin to avenge their master's honor.

So did the bearded man.

A change had taken place in the several years since the stocky "pariah" named as Koropok on his police permit had slipped into Japan disguised as an Ainu. Then it had not been necessary to whip up patriotism, nor to console women, because the dead were American dead at Pearl Harbor, Wake, Manila.

What was happening in the war was altering the expressions of the women, who walked sorrowfully and downcast toward the temple; and it made a wonderful difference to the bearded man as well.

Until comparatively recently, his eyes had been grim, far more so than when he had left Manila to attempt to direct American bombers in a mission over Tokyo by indicating new objectives. But he was able to allow himself, now, the realization that the Japanese were beginning to lose some of their assurance of victory, and this made him, for the briefest of moments, look like the Llewelyn Davies who had flown a P40 for MacArthur.

Davies no longer constantly feared detection. He was accepted for exactly what he seemed, a pariah, a scorned outcast servant in Tokyo's licensed quarter, whose sole occupation was going about his master's business—Koropok the Ainu.

Lately, he had managed the escape of American airmen from a Tokyo prison camp. He knew that they had rejoined their comrades, and his, and that they had related their terrible account of torture, because the Tokyo radio had screamed a furious denial. However, in an effort to lend realism to their disavowal, the Japanese government was at last agreeing to permit food and medicine to be brought from Vladivostok, where it had waited for over a year, to the sick, starved, but still dauntless prisoners.

Intelligence could now be positive that Lieutenant Davies was alive and free. Was G-2 figuring how he should be damaging Japan's war machine? The growing nervousness and tension within the empire made anything difficult.

What I'm doing, thought Lew, cringing in simulated terror from a shopkeeper's blow and protecting his face from spittle, *is marking time, damn it!*

HE WAS carrying a message from Suriga, the manager of Number Nineteen, to Baron Kumikawa. Davies had read the zigzag characters before placing the folded sheet in his bearskin Ainu pouch; the message had nothing to do with war. Even if it had, and even if the information had been vital, Lew knew of no way in which it could have been conveyed to Intelligence. None.

The note was merely an assurance that Suriga was honored with the opportunity of sending *geisha* and pretty young *oshaku* to the baron's party, and that the honorable lord could count on some unwatered Scotch whiskey which had come direct from Singapore. Davies knew that the baron could afford to give his guests the finest entertainment, because Kumikawa was a director in the Greater East Asia Commercial, Religious, and Educational Association, which had the concession for the sale of opium in China and the Philippines.

Davies could see, over the heads of the Japanese, the high iron gate and brick wall of the baron's Tokyo dwelling. According to Yoshiwara gossip, Kumikawa was so high in favor that he had profited well. It was even said that Tojo himself smiled on the baron; and when The Razor smiled, in those days, it was gold in the purse!

Nearer to the procession now, Davies saw that some of the girls, unmarried, had in their hands long strips of paper, *tanzaku,* which, also according to gossip, they would tie to the branches of the ancient plum, to ask heavenly aid in securing husbands instead of being sent to some far island for the pleasure of all soldiers. That such petitions were being written seemed to Lew proof of what was happening.

"Banzai!" shrilled the radio. *"Mo yoroshii zo!* Excellent news!"

The crowd paused to listen.

"Our valiant soldiers," Radio Tokyo boasted, "have cleverly enticed the brutal and cowardly Marines of the United States to the small and unimportant island called Nakushima. Many of the enemy have been ruthlessly killed for their arrogance in leaping into our carefully prepared trap. Our soldiers performed in traditional manner, and have now become deathless heroes for ten times ten thousand years. *Banzai!* Accord all honor to them for having died gloriously in defense of His Imperial Majesty! *Aaaaaa!* The *Tenno!"*

When the crowd had cheered dutifully and began to move ahead again, it was in greater silence than before. The sound of the clapped hands of worshipers at the temple could be clearly heard, so complete was the quiet.

Davies knew that another American attack had been driven home. Where was Nakushima? He had no way of knowing; the Japanese had renamed everything which they had grabbed at the war's start. But when the man disguised

as an Ainu glanced around to see how the people had reacted to the announcement, it appeared obvious to him that the island must be nearer Tokyo. Otherwise, why the frightened eyes, the licked lips, the bowed heads?

Lew's glance showed him something else, which instantly stopped his jubilation. Three dapper gendarmes, the dreaded police of Japanese military intelligence, were making their way through the crowd. The trio were walking in the same direction as the others, but slightly faster; and they were moving slantwise toward the gutter where Koropok the Ainu shuffled along.

Those devils aren't going to the temple to pray, Davies thought. *Have I slipped up anywhere? Are they after me?*

The gendarmes were obviously on duty. Each had a hand on his revolver butt. Lew knew and feared them. They had the soft, purring ways of cats, the penetration of pawnbrokers, and the morals of *geisha*. Not even Japanese officers of the line could match them in cruelty. Torture was their main method of obtaining confessions. Lack of success in an investigation often resulted in the murder of innocent persons so that the gendarmes would not suffer loss of face. Such persons had "failed to show a proper respect for officers of His Imperial Majesty."

If they're not after me, thought Davies, forcing himself to keep his hands unclenched, *who are they after?*

The Kumikawa gate was near. Lew walked imperceptibly faster, shambling like an Ainu. He could see the ancient gatekeeper, who knew him to be from Number Nineteen; a word from this *hakonin* to the baron, regarding the arrest of someone bringing a note to Kumikawa, might save Davies from being taken off for questioning, unless the gendarmes had a real reason for arresting him. *If he ran,* the American knew, *they would shoot him down just to get rid of an Ainu, even if they had no interest in him.*

The gendarmes were closer. There was the possibility that they were following someone behind Davies, but he did not dare so much as turn his head, because it would take no more than that to give the gendarmes an excuse to report that the Ainu dog named Koropok was implicated in the affair.

Then Davies had the answer.

"Four hundred thousand sixty," a squeaky old voice whispered behind him. "Lieutenant Davies. Do not turn 'round."

Davies' heart almost stopped. Was he being trapped? No. The number was that on the dogtag which he had once worn.

"Take in your hand what I give," the voice said.

Something flat and thin, a folded piece of rice paper, was shoved into Davies' hand. His fingers closed on it; and at that moment the gendarmes rushed, knocking the temple-pilgrims aside in their sudden haste.

In Lew's head flashed, "Trapped!" but he had already slipped the paper into his bearskin pouch, substituting for it in hand the message from Suriga to Baron Kumikawa. Then his arms were pinioned by a gendarme.

The Japanese swung him around. Davies now saw that the man who had whispered to him was as old and feeble as his voice had indicated. He wore a bedraggled kimono, much too large for his shrunken frame and obviously not his own. It was of filthy cotton, of the same grayish white as his thin goatee. He was a Korean.

He did not look at Davies at all.

THERE were such men in Tokyo; Davies had seen them before, hostages for the behavior of grandsons in labor battalions. If a young Korean escaped, with the hope of joining China's guerrillas, it was with the knowledge that his revered ancestor would be suspended by the thumbs until there remained just enough life to execute. Even so, Davies had overheard officials who were guests at Nineteen complain that the old fools died willingly if their grandsons fought against Japan. These sad old men were locked up each night, but were permitted to hobble around during the day, when the spy-conscious Japanese hoped surveillance would result in something like this.

A low moan was forced from the old Korean as sly fingers twisted at an agonized neck muscle. The laughter of the crowd as the Korean's goatee waggled up and down caused the gendarme who was applying the torture to swell with pleasure. Not to be outdone, the gendarme who had seized the "pariah" wasted no time in kicking Davies in as many places as could be reached.

"What did he say to you?" the gendarme shouted. "Speak!"

Davies mumbled in slurred Ainu dialect and with hanging head, *"Kon' imi wak'-rim'senu.* I do not understand."

"I will bring you understanding," said the gendarme. His fingers slid up along the tattered sleeve, assuming a hold which, if Davies had moved or struggled, would have burst a tendon. Because the stocky, bearded man stood motionless, all Shohei, the gendarme, could do was to kick the unresisting pariah again.

Shohei's companions, in true Japanese fashion, jeered at Shohei's discomfiture, their laughter, however, being proof to Davies that none of them fully realized the great importance of their bag. Their comments so infuriated Shohei that he sought a means of recovering face. He must show everyone how clever and powerful he really was, and do it instantly.

Intending to throw the Ainu to the ground, where the swarthy pariah could be jumped upon, an action which would bring admiration and applause, the gendarme hastily twined his leg around one of Davies', at the same time placing an arm over Lew's shoulder and across his chest.

Lew gave readily to the pressure, recognizing the familiar wrestling hold. But something he was unable to control made him stoop suddenly, somewhat the way a cringing and frightened pariah would crouch—and the gendarme, caught by the unexpected response to the hold, went sprawling on his face.

Davies did his best to look like an Ainu who had not the slightest idea of what had happened. But though he stood with hanging head, dumbly, he was cursing himself for having given in to the impulse.

That does it, he thought. *I'll be taken in for a beating. I'll be questioned and searched. Perhaps it could have been avoided. What got into me?*

He knew only too well what it was, as Shohei scrambled wildly to his feet and glared at him; he had given in instinctively, because of the indignities he had suffered for so long, to the desire to see a uniformed Japanese go sprawling headlong into the muck of the gutter. But to have done this now. . . .

The note must be destroyed before the search. Davies didn't want to destroy it, unread. His fingers itched to take it from his bearskin pouch; instead, he clutched the message from Number Nineteen tightly. *Keep your head,* he told himself. *Hold tight.*

The other two gendarmes were not smiling now. Shohei squealed, "Ainu beast! *Kuma!* Hairy bear! Dirty bear! *Kuma! Kuma! Kuma!*"

The old gatekeeper came shuffling up.

"Who called?" he asked.

"Nobody called," snarled Shohei, slapping Davies across the face. "I named this animal for what he is. *Kuma.* A sickening hairy bear of an Ainu." He slapped his captive again. "*Kuma!* What a disgusting name! I—"

"My master," said the gatekeeper softly, "is Baron *Kumi*kawa. I do not think he will like what you say. Do you?"

The name stopped the gendarme's tirade. He blinked and licked his lips, and his nostrils wriggled like a rabbit's, as he searched for abject apology. He had plenty of time to select his words, because the old gatekeeper was not pressing him; but the manner in which the porter was smiling told Shohei that the excuse and the apology had better be very good.

As he began, "O honorable and venerable retainer of a great personage, please accept from me my deepest regret that I—" At this moment one of the women temple-goers shuffled timidly up to him and, bowing deeply, touched his arm.

"Honorable officer, please to listen to—"

"Go away," howled Shohei, flinging off hand. "*Abunai yo!* Do you wish to be arrested for interfering with duties?" He made his voice deferential again. "O honorable and venerable retainer of a great and renowned personage—"

"The old one in the white kimono," said the woman, "gave something to the Ainu-*jin.* A paper. I saw it."

The gendarmes who had been holding the old Korean both wanted to rush over to the pariah; each released his grip at the same instant; each had to grab his victim again. Shohei, recovering from his mental paralysis, finally seized Davies' hand, ripped the paper away and opened it.

"It is in code," he announced to his mates. He had puffed up like a mating toad. No longer need he fear his superiors' reprimands for his unfortunate use of the word *kuma.* Nor would he, as punishment, be sent to fight against the *Amerika-jin* savages known as Marines. No. Instead, he would be rewarded.

Oh, the captain would mention the protest from Baron Kumikawa, but would smile because of this great accomplishment, this apprehension of the Korean and the Ainu. How envious his fellow gendarmes would be when he was promoted! He would shortly be their superior, and therefore they would never dare say anything concerning the way in which he had slipped accidentally just as he was about to hurl the pariah down to earth. Oh, what face he had regained!

Shohei was so happy that he slapped the Ainu again and again.

WHILE he slapped away, grinning all over his face, and while his companions shoved their own captive over to where he and Davies were standing, and while the woman waited to receive the gendarmes' permission to continue to the temple, Yagi, the gatekeeper, had been placidly reading the paper in Shohei's hand.

"*Nani!*" he snorted. "Code! What nonsense! The message is an expected one from the honorable brothel-keeper Suriga to my lord."

"Do not talk about nonsense," Shohei cried. "I understand all about codes! A common word is used, and the common word has a different meaning. When a fool like you sees *geisha* written it means nothing! But to the enemy it means battleships! It is plain that the number eleven does not mean eleven *geisha* at all, but eleven ships of His Imperial Majesty which this filthy Korean and filthier Ainu wish to destroy! What do *you* know about codes?"

"Nothing," admitted Yagi. "All I know is that my lord, Baron Kumikawa, intends to give a great party, and that this pariah, employed by Suriga-*san,* brings information con-

cerning proper entertainment for the affair."

One of the other gendarmes asked, "Is the Ainu known to you?"

"He is," said the gatekeeper. He looked at Davies; and as he looked, he began to grin. But he said nothing.

Davies, watchful and cold, wondered what was in the old gatekeeper's head. Yagi was scratching himself the way he did when greatly pleased.

Shohei's face was crimson. "There must be more to this message than is obvious," he argued, as he saw his promotion vanishing. "Can you deny that a woman informed me that she saw it given the Ainu by the Korean?"

"She probably saw a girl hand a *tanzaku* to some other girl who had no paper love-petition to tie on the temple's tree," said the third gendarme.

"But—"

"Shohei," the third gendarme said, "how could the Korean give the pariah a note which had already been given the Ainu by the brothel-keeper? And if it had been anything in code," the gendarme muttered, just loudly enough for Shohei to hear, "you talked too much about it."

To save what little face seemed now possible, Shohei pleaded, "At least we must take the Ainu to the captain for questioning. Did you not see how he resisted me as I ran to arrest the Korean?"

The gatekeeper was clearing his throat; but it was the third gendarme, wanting no part in the reprimand which would follow Baron Kumikawa's protest, who began to speak. "No," he said. He lowered his voice. "First, you are so clumsy that you fell on your face, despite your training in wrestling. Next, you insulted a great lord. To top everything, your actions have delayed patriotic wives in going to the temple. I am afraid you are in trouble, Shohei."

"But this Ainu dog—"

"Is known by the gatekeeper to be a messenger. The Ainu carries the message. Do you think that Baron Kumikawa associates with the enemy, Shohei?"

The second gendarme growled, "The crowd grows. Soon common policemen will come to see what is wrong." He tightened his grip on the Korean's frail arm. "It is time the crowd moves on, and that we return with the Korean."

And heaven help him, thought Davies.

It must have occurred to the pair who were holding the old Korean that although their mate would be held officially responsible for what had happened, their own conduct before the civilians had brought no applause. A quick word was passed; the gray Korean was knocked down. While one of the gendarmes shouted, "Oh, you dare resist us, do you?" the other kicked the old man in the stomach.

The Korean was actually smiling. "I am very old," he said. "What is pain? Nothing. What is death? Less."

Davies tried not to look.

When no cheers rose from the street, which was by now packed from side to side with additional pilgrims, all of whom were going to pray for the dead, Lew heard the gatekeeper mutter, thinking aloud, "This is not good. Fortunately my lord Kumikawa understands the situation."

It was so silent that what the Korean moaned, in Japanese, was plainly audible. "You may kill this body," the old man groaned, "and you may cut this flesh into a thousand pieces. But the soul will remain to cry out. *Mansei!*"

The kicking, Davies knew, was mere preliminary. The Korean was under suspicion. When the old man was really expertly tortured, could he remain silent? The Korean must have been given an exact description of the Ainu pariah known as Koropok, and the Korean had been told the serial number of Lieutenant Llewelyn Davies. By whom? By

the person who had given the old man the message which was in Koropok's bearskin pouch. And . . . *what was in the message?*

Would the contents be wrung from the Korean? Wouldn't the old man, in agony, tell everything he knew when he was questioned?

At that moment, Davies had the answer. The Korean had been jerked to his feet. He was actually smiling. "I am very old," he said. "What is pain? Nothing. What is death? Less." The smile did not wane as he added, "There is only me;" and, as the words were uttered, he did look at Davies for a fraction of time.

It was apparent to Davies that the gendarmes' defenseless victim was informing him that no confession could be wrung from one who feared neither death nor agony. By "There is only me," the Korean undoubtedly meant that the man whom he knew to be an American must expect no other contact.

Shohei struck the old man across the mouth with his revolver butt. The Korean continued to smile. In prayer, through crushed and bloodied lips, the old man began to chant, *"Po che choong sa'ng . . choong sa'ng . . ."*

"Monkey talk," said Yagi. *"Mionichi ma' naorimasumai!* He will talk differently soon. Come deliver your message. And remember I saved you!"

Why didn't Yagi take the message and deliver it himself? Something was in the wind. "I am grateful," mumbled Davies humbly, following the gatekeeper. *I've got to have a look at the paper in my pouch,* worried Lew, *and then destroy it.* He swallowed slowly audibly, repeatedly, as if nauseated. "Please forgive me," he whimpered, "the bottom of my stomach is rising."

Yagi grabbed his sleeve. "If you vomit here, such defilement among worshipers will cause arrest. This must not happen. Hurry!"

Here was more proof to Davies that the gatekeeper intended to make use of him. How? There was no way of knowing.

The unlit lanterns stirred on their poles as the temple bell sent its brazen sound rocking down the street. The women, at the summons, pressed ahead rapidly, carrying gatekeeper and pariah with them. The pair were almost at Baron Kumikawa's iron gate when the voice of the Korean reached them, amazingly strong and vibrant.

"Po che choong sa'ng! I appeal to the four hundred thousand and sixty divinities to find some way to avenge me! I pray to the four hundred thousand—"

The voice stopped; the echo of the bell hummed on.

Davies could only hope that the gendarmes, made furious by the defiant outcry, had killed the Korean. Quick death was the only merciful thing which could be hoped for, for the brave old man. The answer to the appeal for vengeance addressed to No. 400,060 must be in the communication which Lew chafed to read.

CHAPTER II

MESSAGE FROM HOME

YAGI unlocked the gate, pushed the Ainu through and, coming after him, locked it from the inside. Beyond the sanded court was Baron Kumikawa's great mansion; to reach it, thick clumps of shrubs had to be rounded.

Here was another world, a complete contrast to the street of shabby shops. To the right, concealed from the outside, was picture-book Japan. A lake lay ahead, a miniature one, dotted with miniature islets connected by stone bridges. The water, in the evening haze, wound about little rock-strewn hills and disappeared in dark, blue-black, rippleless threads between tiny promontories. Beside a bamboo thicket was a wooden pavilion for tea-ceremonies and garden-viewing. Crows on its roof exchanged signals with those on the house-top.

"Ki' to i' ni," said Yagi. "Behind that small building you will find the place where the bottom of your stomach can come to the surface. Waste no time." The gatekeeper gave Davies a shove. "I will wait for you here."

It was difficult for Davies to shamble off like a pariah, and to stumble a few times on the flat stones of the path as if he were unaccustomed to such magnificence as was underfoot in the baron's garden.

Inside the *benjo* it was dark. Davies made certain that Yagi had not followed him; then, stooping down, he opened his pouch, took out the folded paper, and cupped it in his hand. Something from home! A word to Llewelyn Davies, and not to the outcast who had been slapped and kicked and starved since Pearl Harbor—who, for all that time, had been alone in Japan.

Carefully, swiftly, Davies unfolded the thin sheet.

The light was failing; but to Davies each word stood out on the paper like ink on white silk. Like ebony on silvery lacquer. But also like the handwriting on the wall, written so long ago, and difficult to understand.

WERE YOU RIGHT, OR WAS I?
ANDY

That was all. That was the entire message.

Davies' fingers automatically shredded the paper. The portion of it containing the one sentence he chewed and swallowed; the rest he dropped into the *benjo*. Andy. Andy Craig. The amateur strategist, transferred from a fighting unit of P40s over to G-2 just before Lew's departure from Manila

Andy! What would it be like to be sitting with him now, informing him what was going on in Tokyo and Japan, telling him of those things which a servant at Number Nineteen overheard when drunken officials talked? What would it be like to speak in English to a *friend*, and to drink an American drink and smoke an American cigarette—to be an American again!

A request for information, Davies realized, had to veil the very purpose of the question, lest the message fall into Japanese hands and reveal to them what might be intended. The request had to be cryptic. But this one was so broad, so vague, so apt to concern itself with any one of a hundred things, that it brought no hint as to what Intelligence must desperately want to learn.

I've argued with Andy about everything under the sun, thought Lew. *This must be about the war, of course. It must be about something Andy's sure I'll remember, and where we really went to town.*

It came to him, as he turned to leave the *benjo*, that the problem was academic, because the Korean, the go-between who had somehow received the communication, and who had been supposed somehow to transmit the reply to the United States, was as good as dead. An answer couldn't be delivered to G-2; the old Korean had told Davies that no other contact could be expected.

But he asked me to find a way to avenge him, flashed through Davies' head as he stepped into the hot darkness, *and he meant that I should do it by carrying out the instructions in the message.*

Surely only desperation brought about by failure had forced the Korean to hope for what was impossible. Even if Lew knew the answer, it was ridiculous to believe that he could get it to G-2. It couldn't be done.

The swift Oriental night had lowered over the garden. The miniature lake was a sheet of shining ink, as were the jagged tiny bays; the peaks and promontories had lost form. The islands, with their dwarfed trees, had to be guessed at. An enormous whiskered carp leaped, gulped a night-fly, and splashed back; the circles which it made on the surface could not be seen, either, although the sound of diminutive wavelets lapping against the shore was singularly real.

IT WAS then, perhaps because of the bays and islands, that Davies, with his mind back in Manila with his fellow officer, remembered the particular argument to which Craig must be referring. There was no doubt; Lew was positive, and it fitted in perfectly with the sort of thing which Intelligence would want to know. The mere fact that G-2, at this time, was interested, brought a deep, warm feeling to Davies, because it meant that the armed forces of the United States were closing in—closing in to bomber range.

The argument had been a hot one. All modern strategy had been on Andy Craig's side. On Davies' side had been knowledge of the Japanese.

What would the Japanese Navy do when war came? That had been the argument. It was Craig who insisted that the Nipponese battle fleet would attack with fury and recklessness, following up immediate successes; it was Davies who disagreed. The Japanese, Lew had insisted, would hold the heavy units of their fleet near Japan. The battle fleet would not be risked early in the war. Great restraint on the part of the admirals would be necessary; but they had shown such restraint before, following their initial and treacherous attack on Russia in 1904, and, because it had been successful then, they would repeat the operation exactly, monkey-fashion. Japan's heavy ships-of-the-line, under Togo, had skulked and been held back, despite all taunts of cowardice, until there was perfect opportunity to annihilate the Russian fleets. It had worked then, Davies had argued, and the Japs didn't change easily. They would use an identical strategy against the United States.

"The Japanese fleet," Lew remembered having said, as he started now toward the waiting gatekeeper, "will hide in safety behind Japan proper, just as it did when they fought Russia. I'll bet a bottle of beer that their admirals are committed to a policy of waiting until they get our battle fleet where they want it. Then they will strike, hard. And I'll bet another bottle that the big Nip ships will be anchored at the very same fortunate place where they hid while waiting to finish off the Russians. They'll anchor off Tsushima Island."

According to what Koropok the Ainu had overheard at Number Nineteen, from one word on one night, from a location whispered in drunkenness on another, this was what had happened. The Japanese fleet was at Tsushima.

All I've got to do, thought Lew somberly, understanding to the full now the desperation of the old Korean, *is to get the information to our side.* He drew a painful breath as his lips formed, "It isn't possible." It was absurd to even think about it.

"Atsui ni komaru," said Yagi, advancing to meet the shadowy figure of Koropok. "You are to have the privilege of prostrating yourself before the great Lord Kumikawa, an honor of which you will boast to any descendants you dare to have." Yagi placed his hand on Davies' shoulder, and then squeezed the muscles of the pariah's upper arm. *"Mah!"* he ejaculated. "You are like a bear! Good!"

The gatekeeper began to chuckle again, and by the time the pair reached the house, he was laughing and rubbing his chin. He beat down the protests of the maid-servant when the

jochu objected to taking him and his forbidden-to-enter companion to the baron, who was engaged with guests. Yagi insisted that he himself had admitted the honorable visitors, and that it was they who had asked him to bring the Ainu to the baron.

This Davies was sure was untrue. Obviously, the old gatekeeper was a trusted retainer, and privileged to take liberties.

Baron Kumikawa's residence was in foreign style. The carpeted hall along which the *jochu* led the way was lined with glass cases containing a collection of china, from primitives the color of Chinese pit-clay to magnificent crested Spode taken at Singapore. There were pianos, paintings, and divans in the rooms off the hall; and when the girl, after bowing to a closed door, opened it timidly, Davies heard the metallic rasping of the reception of a high-frequency broadcast—from the States!

"*ZZnnzbrkk!* . . . American, Sixth Army . . . *mm*MacArthur*rrzkzk* . . . *brk!* . . . *Kkmmzk-zzfff*Fourth Marines*zzzzzzbrk!* . . . the capture of this airfield assures*sk!* . . . *bbbzk!* . . . now seven hundred miles from Japan*nnzzzbrk!* . . ."

Within bomber range! No wonder Intelligence wanted to know the location of the Imperial battle fleet.

There were a half dozen Japanese in the room where Yagi bowed, kicking sidewise at the pariah to make him prostrate himself.

"Japanese dead*rkdrkzz* . . . *zkzbrk!* . . . seven thousand killed and . . . *zzzzz* . . . nine hundred taken prisoner*rrrzzzbkbk* . . ."

"Mo yoroshii," ordered the fattest of the Japanese, who was sprawled in a big chair. "That is enough. Shut it off."

While one of the guests jumped to do Baron Kumikawa's bidding, Davies observed this man to whom the gatekeeper had brought him. An opened silk kimono exposed the great paunch and chest, singularly like a Japanese wrestler's. Kumikawa's black, sly eyes were cold and restless; he had a cruel button of a mouth. Baron Odagiri Kumikawa, the confidant of Tojo the Razor. A shrewd man.

His scrutiny of the bearded pariah known as Koropok was so keen that the American began to wonder if the baron had penetrated a disguise which had become almost automatic. Kumikawa waited until the *jochu* was padding down the hall before taking his eyes from the man in the tattered jacket. Then he turned to the gatekeeper and smiled.

"Wakarimasu ka?" the baron asked the fidgeting retainer. "What is your opinion of the

"You are to have the privilege of prostrating yourself before the great Lord Kumikawa," Yagi said, advancing to meet the ragged Koropok.

news the Americans have broadcast tonight?"

Yagi grinned broadly, since his master knew he had not understood a word of the *Amerikajin* lies. "If the news is good," said Yagi, "it will soon be even better. If it is bad, our final victory will be more sweet."

Kumikawa snarled at his guests, "*You* need faith such as my retainer's. *Aa!* Your attitude of fear has filtered down to the people. *Makoto ni o sewa da!* Such advice you give me! Why do I bother with you? You, Tsumuri, had the effrontery to suggest an elimination of celebrations, and instead wish to inform the subjects of His Imperial Majesty that it will be more patriotic to continue at work! A fine way to make everyone believe that we are winning! *Mah!* Even my old gatekeeper has far more sense!" Kumikawa took a great gulp of Scotch and soda from the glass beside him, burped politely, and then added, "I do not know why

he has offended my nostrils in bringing a hairy Ainu here, but he has a reason for it."

"A good one," said Yagi promptly. "A fool of a gendarme was about to arrest him who is the messenger from the honorable brothel. In fright, the Ainu made a little shrug of the shoulders, and such is the strength of his arms and body that the gendarme fell flat on his face. It came to me that an Ainu dog, a pariah, a less-than-nothing, might have a place in your plans, O Lord."

THE baron's mouth rounded to a bright red O, and then he began to laugh until his ponderous body quivered like a bowl of yellow fish-jelly. "Yagi," he said, when he was able to speak, "I only wish that my councillors here had a little of your intelligence. *Ho!* How the people will love such a spectacle! An Ainu!"

Love what? Lew missed no word.

"From the manner in which the women walked to the temple," said the gatekeeper, "it is time something is done. Their unpatriotic sorrow is clear proof that duty to *aaaa!* the *Tenno!* is being forgotten."

Tsumuri, the wizened Japanese connected with Radio Tokyo, snarled, "Were they beaten for such disloyal conduct? It is to be hoped that the gendarmes made arrests as an example. If I had my way—"

"Beat-kick-slap is your way," broke in Kumikawa disgustedly. "That is all you know. Morale is *induced.* It comes from subtleties." The baron's appraising eyes returned to the stocky figure of the pariah. "You can wrestle?" he asked.

Davies, as if unaware that the question was directed to him, remained silent, head and hands hanging.

"Call the animal by name, Lord," suggested Yagi. "Koropok."

Davies turned humbly toward the gatekeeper.

"Koropok," Kumikawa repeated, and when Davies' eyes faltered up to his, the big baron demanded, "where did you learn to wrestle, Koropok?"

"Dan' sa' yorosh'k'rba," mumbled Davies, in clipped Ainu dialect, apologizing for his very presence. He fumbled for the message which ordinarily would have been given to a servant. When it was out of his pouch, he held it forward fearfully. He muttered, "My master Suriga-*san* will beat me because I am slow in returning to his house. O Lord, will you beat me also?"

"Nobody will beat you," promised Kumikawa, snatching the note and reading it. *"Geisha* and whiskey, all as ordered," he announced. "I will enjoy both after consummation of my plans." The Japanese rose heavily to his feet, and walked closer to Davies. "I will take care of you, Koropok," he said, grinning evilly.

"Thank you, Lord," said Davies.

"Chikusho de saye mo on wo shiru," chuckled Kumikawa. "The beast has a sense of gratitude; but his muscles are more important." He grinned at the gatekeeper, Yagi, who grinned in toothless response. "When I teach him a little of the art of *shirotozumo,* he will wrestle well enough to hurl down whichever starved American prisoner we drag into the ring with him. This will certainly encourage our people. It will be a climax, after they have already witnessed the ease with which our own wrestlers are able to smash Americans. You agree?"

So that was it. American prisoners pitted against professional Japanese wrestlers, who would bang them around for the amusement of the throng. No—it was going to be done for more than mere entertainment. It would show the weakness of American soldiers—officers, probably, and introduced as such. It would raise drooping Jap morale. It would get minds away from deaths and defeats. And Davies himself, as he was realizing, was to aid in this; he was to be the final unanswerable proof. When a despised Ainu pariah, a spat-upon dog, was seen to be superior to an *Amerika-jin,* how the Japanese would scream, and how their spirits would rise!

"Now," said the baron, waddling back to his chair and draining his glass, "you gentlemen were inclined to listen to Tsumuri, who was all for more punishment. Let me ask you: were you right, or was I?"

While the visitors caroled agreement with the baron, who had been advocating subtle entertainment, Kumikawa's repetition of the words which the Korean had given Davies brought Lew's problem into focus again. How could he answer it, with the Korean under arrest and as good as dead?

Were you right, or was I? Were you, Lew Davies, right in saying that the Imperial battle fleet would be anchored off Tsushima, waiting the proper opportunity to strike, or was Andy Craig right in arguing that it would attack fanatically at the first threat to the Empire? Davies had been right, and knew it; but what could he do about it now? Nothing. And American bombers were in range!

Tsumuri, having lost face, attempted to regain some of it by elaborating on the baron's idea. Smiling all over his face, he wheezed, *"Warui wa iawnai!* How encouraging it will also be to our brave soldiers when they listen to the account! Oh, how I thought of this immediately! I myself will arrange it. Our radio will take the story to them, wherever they may be. How they will laugh when the pariah is named as victor! How they will realize the weakness of Americans!"

"You are forgetting," Baron Kumikawa snapped, "that our soldiers know a little some-

thing about the Americans, too, these days.

Again, in spite of Davies' concentration on the problem which transcended any question of morale, the man known as Koropok had missed none of the talk. If Kumikawa, keenest of the Japanese, had been watching the pariah closely, he might have seen a gleam in the bearded man's dark eyes, which vanished as swiftly as it came. Was there, after all, a possibility of carrying out the order from G-2? A word, one word, could be the answer. Could it be managed?

Davies muttered, "Koropok would like to kill an *Amerika-jin,*" to start things. He began to tremble, acting well, as if suddenly aware of his temerity in speaking without having been questioned by a Japanese.

"You will have your chance," shouted Kumikawa, waving back the other men who would have slapped the Ainu across the mouth. "With your muscles, and what I teach you, who can say that some prisoner will not die in your bear's grip? *Hai!* It is a good thing that in my youth I took part in amateur wrestling in summer-heat! And I was a good man at it, too!"

"I would like to kill *Amerika-jin* soldiers with a gun," Koropok mumbled. He let his shaggy head rise. Then, heart beating faster as he began to plan, he started it by banking on his knowledge of the Japanese. "Koropok," he said, touching himself on the chest, "wants to kill *Amerika-jin* in battle."

Japanese curiosity, as Davies had figured, rose to the bait. Every person in the room demanded, "Why?"

"Because an Ainu is better than those white beasts."

Tsumuri cried, "You see, Kumikawa-*san,* the value of our propaganda!" The Radio Tokyo official was so delighted that he said to Davies, "We will inform the Americans what you have said, Koropok. More, word of your victory over one of their men will be heard by them. Our magic will bring them the words."

Deep in his beard, now that the groundwork was prepared, Davies, said, "O, Lord, in the mountains from which I come it is the custom for the defeated man to admit that he must eat dust."

Would it work?

"I like the idea," said Kumikawa, "but whether or not those stubborn prisoners will admit being beaten is a different matter. I know this much," he added, cutting off what Tsumuri was trying to say, "the fancy performances of Radio Tokyo, where an American loyal to Japan imitates a prisoner's voice, is laughed at in the United States. It must be the voice of the prisoner. Possibly a little persuasion by gendarmes may be advisable, Tsumuri."

"It can be arranged."

"Good," said Kumikawa. He dismissed the meeting with, "Now I will take my walk around my garden and contemplate beauty. You," he said to Koropok, "are to live in my house. Suriga will not object. In one way or another, a brothel-keeper always manages a profit. Let him sleep in your room, Yagi."

"You are forgetting," Baron Kumikawa snapped, "that our soldiers know a little something about the Americans, too, these days."

And so Koropok came to the mansion.

CHAPTER III

BARON KUMIKAWA'S SCHEME

IT WAS strange to be in a house, even in the least corner of it, where there were beds instead of quilts, although the pariah, like the servants, slept on the floor. It was strange, and disconcerting, to smell coffee in the morning, for the first time since arriving in Japan. The baron liked *kohi* on arising, having lived abroad; he liked a steaming bowl of it, and also *hammu-ekk* and *bif-tekki* and something with bones known as *ram cha-ropps.* He read books in English and German; he listened to shortwave broadcasts in both languages; and there was danger in this house, Davies knew from the start. The traveled, shrewd Kumikawa was certain to test Davies'

masquerade with the acid of his intelligence.

Baron Kumikawa, Davies learned from the beginning of instruction, was engaged in playing with a new and enjoyable toy. The toy was not just a stupid pariah, but an idea: Kumikawa, now fat and middle-aged, intended to utilize the stocky, hardened body of an Ainu to carry out the directions of the baron's mind. The baron would make of the pariah a robot wrestler, mechanically able to carry out the holds of Japanese wrestling, *zumo,* and mechanically able to meet and answer the holds when they were employed by an opponent.

Koropok's training began on the first morning, after a breakfast in which meat was included, since a Japanese wrestler's diet was different from that of other men. After eating, Koropok was taken by Yagi to the bare room where the baron exercised with weights and pulleys.

"*Abunai yo!*" warned the gatekeeper, squatting down comfortably and picking his teeth, having investigated portions of the pariah's own meal. "Take care! The lord is so strong that with a touch of a finger on your neck he can send you to your ancestors, if you have any. Obey him in all things, Koropok. He is generous to a fault. If he should reward you with a coin or two, remember that if it had not been for me the gendarmes would have tortured you."

"If the honorable master should do as you say," said Davies, "I will prostrate myself, and beg him to give the coins to you or you will beat me. I—"

The gatekeeper, after blinking and deciding that the Ainu must have spoken innocently, said, "Say nothing. Merely give me any coins."

When the baron arrived, smoking a pungent Cairo-made cigarette, and wearing a cool cotton kimono, the business of making a wrestler out of an Ainu began. Yagi's post at the gate had been taken over by a *jochu.* The gatekeeper was to act as sparring partner during early training, although later Kumikawa mentioned that an actual wrestler might be engaged when Koropok knew a little.

Kumikawa's little eyes surveyed Davies from head to foot when the body of the white man was naked. Although the morning was already hot, Davies was cold under a keener scrutiny than he had ever faced in Japan. But the baron only said, "He is no weakling. Fasten his belt, Yagi," and Koropok was quickly belted with the soft, thick cloth worn by Japanese wrestlers.

Simply, the baron began to explain *zumo,* Japanese wrestling. Had Koropok ever witnessed a contest? Oh, once Koropok had been a sweeper-at-contests, and had been able to see a little? Excellent! Then he knew that there was a square ring, didn't he? Good again! He knew that victory went to the wrestler who was able to shove or push or carry his opponent from the ring?

"Yes, Lord," admitted Davies.

"*Oide nasai!* Come here! See how I suddenly slip my hands down to your belt, and, as you brace yourself, I suddenly seize the knot behind your back, and—*yoh!*—up and backward you go!"

If there had been a ring, Koropok would have been out of it, as the pudgy baron lifted him and carried him backward. Kumikawa was puffing from the exertion, but he was laughing.

"I am not so old as I thought," he gasped to Yagi. "Now, belt yourself, and we will see if Koropok can repeat the operation."

And so the training began. There was the arm-grip and the leg-to-leg and head-to-neck—over and over and over. When these became automatic, Koropok also had to recognize the ejaculation or word of encouragement from the baron which was the signal for employment of a particular grip.

"Enough, for the day," said Kumikawa at last. "He is less stupid than I feared. We are really getting somewhere."

You are, thought Davies, *but am I?*

To accomplish what he intended, Lew knew that he must do a good job of what the baron wanted. Kumikawa had to be convinced that even an Ainu could defeat an ailing American beyond the slightest doubt, for the edification of a Japanese audience. Nor must Kumikawa lose interest, become bored, and decide not to go through with his plans.

If this happened, Davies knew of no other way whereby the answer to Andy's note could ever reach Intelligence.

AT ABOUT the time Kumikawa shortened his training periods with Koropok, Yagi suggested the employment of an old professional wrestler, a *toshiyori* who had taught younger wrestlers before the war. This Kumikawa vetoed. Instead, he found a fat rice-brewer, shaped like a wrestler and weighing over two hundred pounds. He did this, Davies believed, because he had decided that a professional might properly claim some of the credit in the manufacture of a wrestler. However, the actual tugging and pushing and grunting, as brewer and pariah butted one another around in their search for grips, revived Kumikawa's flagging interest.

It was Davies, a little later, after the baron had missed a morning's bout, who muttered that when he had been a *geta*-mender, before being engaged at the honorable brothel, he had seen boys wrestling on summer nights, and it would be helpful if he could again witness the courage and skill of Japanese boys . . .

Kumikawa jumped at the idea. The radio news was not good. One of these days, the baron believed, Japan's fears of bombing would

come true. It was a wonder it had not happened by now; and it made the baron uneasy. The enemy was now within land-based bomber range. Why did they wait? Had they a particular target in mind? A terrible annihilation? The fortunate thing was that the Americans could receive no information as to where, precisely, to strike. Kumikawa had scorn for the gendarmes; but they did follow everyone, and arrested so many that they were bound to net the wishful Koreans and Formosans along with the innocent people. Not that anyone could get word from Japan to America.

Most fortunate of all was that the battle fleet was in security, and refused to risk combat until an attack was made on Japan proper, or until the Americans could be wiped out at sea, as had been done to the Russians.

Kumikawa knew the expressions which he saw on faces in the streets. Did Radio Tokyo think that the evidence of death could be talked or sung out of the minds of mothers and fathers and wives? Perhaps he himself was no smarter, intending to furnish them with morale-building entertainment . . .

The baron was at this low when Koropok made the suggestion. The baron jumped at the idea merely to be doing something different. He, and his crony-retainer Yagi, and Koropok, went to the poorest part of Tokyo, down stinking narrow alleys, where men and women alike stood stark naked at evening in their doorways. The quarter was swampy; armies of mosquitoes attacked anything human.

"They are like the *Amerika-jin*," complained Yagi of the insects. "They do not attack where we have the right to expect them!"

And there are many of them, thought Kumikawa. *Too many?*

There was an opening at the end of an alley barely four feet wide. Here, on the street, boys of seven and eight competed. The ring was marked off by ropes on the earth; four sticks were the corner pillars. The sky was the roof. Once a nude woman rushed into the makeshift ring to smack the boy who had defeated her own. The umpire was a *gorotsuki*, a crippled blackmailer who lived by threatening thieves and gamblers. His every decision was vehemently questioned. Kumikawa remained silent only during the first bout; after that, he yelled and protested like the most ragged *rikisha*-puller, sweating and red in the face.

An hour ago, he had lounged in a chair, sipping a highball. He had listened to world affairs over the radio and made notes. He had conferred by telephone as important men asked his advice. Now, he was one with the crowd.

"Pull off his arm!" he screeched, as one urchin tried to shove another out of the ring with an arm-grip. "Pull harder!"

The veneer was pretty thin, Lew realized. He, for his part, watched trick and counter-trick, because the baron would certainly speak of them; and it came to the American, watching the monkey-see-monkey-do Japanese boys, who imitated exactly what they had seen before, that there were shrewd and maiming holds and slaps about which Kumikawa had told him nothing. Why? It occurred to Davies, as he looked, that after the Ainu had defeated the American, the audience would have the additional pleasure of watching some gigantic, heavily-muscled and paunched wrestler half kill that selfsame pariah. *If I can get my answer across,* thought Davies, *they can do what they like.*

"Next week," Kumikawa hissed in his ear,

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"you yourself will be in the ring, Koropok! Thousands will watch what you do to an *Amerika-jin!* And millions will hear him when he is forced to admit his defeat. Are you ready for it?"

"I am ready," said Koropok.

He had spoken more firmly than he intended; but this only pleased the excited baron. *"Mah!"* he ejaculated. "You even talk like a man now! I have done something to you." He began to shake with laughter. "But will Suriga like your future behavior at Number Nineteen? Oh, what a joke that will be on him, when you go back to work for him again!"

Two interpretations of this were possible. One was that Koropok could work again when he was returned to Nineteen, but would be less submissive. The other, toward which Davies inclined, was that Koropok would be so thoroughly pounded, bruised and possibly maimed by a Japanese wrestler, that, when Koropok crept back to Number Nineteen after the performance, it would be a long, long time before he could work at all.

"I am glad I came," Kumikawa grunted, when he tired. "It is proof that intelligent minds can be made to forget the war."

HE ordered Yagi and Koropok back to the mansion, while he himself sought more soothing entertainment. Along with it, he accomplished the following results: sale of cigarette, orange, shaved ice, and beer concessions for the Great Wrestling; a considerable cut, cash in advance, from the *zumojaya*, the tea-house nearest the wrestling hall—because if he had not made the contest possible, they would have had no guests—and an equal amount from the licensed quarter, which, on the night of the wrestling, would do an increased business. On his way home, highly satisfied, he stopped to visit the retired *toshiyori*, the wrestling instructor from whom he had learned many tricks, and not only talked him out of an embroidered heavy silk wrestlers'-apron for the Ainu, but out of a few coins as well, which would put the *toshiyori's* name on the program. It was too late to arrange for a percentage of program sales that night, but the baron would remember to do it in the morning.

He slept well that night. All had gone like clockwork, even if once or twice he had wondered if it were worth the effort.

He slept far better than his protegé, Koropok the Ainu. In Davies' ears, as he twisted on his quilt with Yagi snoring near him, was the sound of thousands of ugly Japanese voices, thrilled at the spectacle of the defeat of Americans by powerful Japanese, and by even an Ainu pariah; American soldiers—fed just enough to remain alive, matched against bull strength and savage trickery.

If the previous weeks had dragged, the final week flew. Koropok was taught the ceremonial preliminaries in such a way that his mistakes would cause laughter. His execution of grips and holds were tested and retested, and also his responses to Kumikawa's coded directions. And then . . . then, he was on his way to the hall, to the *Kokugikwan*, and, seemingly without the passage of time, he was in a room there, surrounded by Japanese whom the smiling baron had invited to examine the Ainu. The reason for the invitations was almost immediately obvious: the baron was willing to wager that he could pick the exact moment, from the start of Koropok's combat with an American, when the latter would be hurled from the ring.

Davies was in better physical condition than before the baron had started the training; but he was horribly nervous, and knew it. To add to his disturbing doubts, he overheard enough talk to start cold sweat: the heavy units of the American fleet, he heard, were becoming more and more bold, and their battle formations were being plotted by submarines which made no effort to pick off single ships, because before long the entire fleet would be annihilated. The Americans were acting similarly to the Russians, and, as in the Russo-Japanese War, one of these days the Japanese would have the American fleet where they wanted it. Then there would be destruction, after which Japan would move back, island by island, across the Pacific, to the American mainland and victory, to a peace signed in Washington.

Kumikawa finally bowed the other Japanese out of the room. Squatting beside Koropok, he gave him last instructions, a repetition of what he had already ordered. He said at the end, "Rest with closed eyes, Koropok. I know a thing or two of Ainu customs. Before the Ainu go to kill bears for fat and food and skins, it is your tradition to pray to your *kamui*, your god. Do so now, in silence and with all reverence. Pray that your god put strength into your body."

Smart. Davies understood what Kumikawa was about; he was allowing the pariah to hypnotize himself with the idea of victory.

The little room off the great wrestling hall was quiet. Yagi squatted in a corner; Kumikawa calmly read *Japan's Volkswirthschaft und Staatshaushalt* and smiled to himself as he figured from it another way to increase his fortune. And Koropok, in a padded kimono, heard the sounds which filtered into the room.

Japanese laughter. Shrill shouts. As the hall packed from the central ring to the four walls, the noise grew and grew, and out of it rolled the thunder of beaten drums which, in peace, would have been pounded on the top of a drum-tower. The *yagura daiko* pealed like thunder; and when the roaring stopped, abruptly, Davies heard one shout. *"Banzai!"*

It was a full minute before the waiting audience, in proper silence now, heard the announcer shout, "On the east, Hitachiyamaaaaa! On the west, Sunomogoriiiii!" Those would be the first two wrestlers, professionals. Davies, with his eyes closed, envisioned the two fat Japanese with the umpire standing between. When the umpire's fan was lowered, the wrestlers would rush forward.

Deliberately, coldly, the American reviewed in his own mind what he had to do. If his plan were imperfect, it was the only one possible. It might not work. He wondered what his own reaction would be, were he put in the place of whatever American would face him in the ring, in Tokyo, faced by an Ainu . . .

It was a full half hour before Baron Kumikawa marked his place in the book with a convenient cockroach, handed it to Yagi, and said, "It is time."

Koropok stood up also, and shrugged out of the kimono. He was naked, save for the embroidered vermilion-and-green silk wrestler's apron and the thick, plaited cotton wrestler's belt. He had legs like a running guard's, a lean waist, wide shoulders. He tingled from head to foot.

"Come," said the baron.

CHAPTER IV

TOYKO ROSE

THE next sound Davies heard was the exultant roar of the audience, packed by thousands into the hall, in the center of which, raised above the floor, was the ring. But the outcry, the derision, was not for him.

The howls and jeers were for the three Americans who had mounted to the rope-bordered, pillared ring. One was tall and thin and dark, with a newly healed wound slanting across his cheek. The second was shorter, slight also, with light hair. The third was a true *seiyo-jin*, a red-haired barbarian. As Davies looked up at them, his heart began to pound—with cold, calculated rage, with hot sympathy, and with a great pride.

Not one was afraid.

The Americans were scarecrow-gaunt. Everything possible had been done to make them the objects for Japanese laughter. Their wrestling-belts were of cotton, but strands of red, white, and blue had been twisted through the proper white. Their aprons were of sacking. All three were thin to emaciation.

Davies knew none of them.

While the crowd howled, Kumikawa and Yagi escorted Koropok toward empty chairs at the corner of the ring where a black-cloth-wrapped post represented the winter-corner. Each pillar about the ring was named for a season; these were the traditional *shihonbashira*, the four pillars of wrestling. In the middle of the ring was a fourth horizontal projection, much lower and thinner than the others, and the object of stares: a microphone. What the Japanese was hissing and spitting into it could not be heard here, but Lew knew that it was being recorded for short wave broadcast to Japanese troops.

When this announcer had finished, gendarmes flanked two other employees of Radio Tokyo as they stepped into the ring. One was a middle-aged white man. The other was a woman, young, attractive, expensively dressed, white—Tokyo Rose. Davies, before he sat clumsily in

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his chair, as an Ainu would sit, saw the girl move over to the American prisoners where they stood quietly together. She smiled and spoke. She extended her hand graciously.

None of the prisoners accepted it. *Good kids,* thought Davies. Did they realize what faced them? Davies was pretty sure that they did.

The renegade broadcaster, Toyko Rose, said something to the three prisoners, in anger. Then she slapped the nearest of the men, the one with red hair. While the audience yelled approval, the American staggered. One of his companions steadied him. Red stained his face, but his lips remained firm.

The hall was stifling hot. There was in it the bitter scent of orange, and the biting odor of black tobacco, and the sickish-sweet smell of Japanese bodies sweating in anticipation. To what happened next Davies shut his eyes, but he could not help hearing what took place.

"On the east," bellowed the umpire, "Kaigetsuuu! Champion! Oh, what do I see on the west? *Dare-mo-nai!* Nobody! Nobody with red hair!"

Davies heard the Japanese' feet stamping; there was a pause, a grunt. A moment of silence. The thud of a falling body.

The audience roared, the high shrill venom of the women piercing the yells of the men—civilians, soldiers, sailors, Royal Marines. Davies heard also the excited treble of Tokyo Rose as she spoke into her microphone. "Can you hear the Japanese nation applauding a Japanese hero, Americans? Don't fight! Disobey your officers! If you continue fighting, you will be made prisoners, while men at home steal your wives. Your fate will be that of these men here. And just think: even a pariah, an uncouth and uncivilized Ainu, can master your officers! Listen! In a moment we are going to broadcast the match between an American officer and an Ainu!"

Kumikawa touched Koropok on the shoulder.

"It is time," he said. "Do you remember everything, Koropok?"

"I am forgetting nothing," said Davies softly.

Then he was in the ring. The baron removed the costly apron after the audience goggled. Davies went through the preliminaries while the entire hall laughed, because the Ainu, instead of gargling with water, spitting it out, and then purifying his body with pinches of salt, did just the opposite. He put the salt in his mouth; he sprinkled water on his body.

His every preliminary posture was wrong. Oh, this was going to be a sight, something to relate for years! How clever was Baron Kumikawa!

Davies avoided looking at his opponent directly. The prisoner was the slight, blond American, outweighed by thirty or forty pounds.

The umpire's fan waved, and dropped. Davies shuffled forward, stamping his bare feet incorrectly. The other American watched him quietly and, as the baron shouted the veiled command for Koropok to grapple and Davies came in, the prisoner lashed out with a left which caught Lew squarely on the nose.

Good kid, thought Davies again. *Nice going, pal!*

The prisoner's left flicked out again in a sharp jab.

"On the whiskers, Fitz!" shouted the tall, dark prisoner.

But Davies, as the fat baron danced up and down, let the other American's quick right cross slip past, and then had both hands behind the blond prisoner's back and tight about the belt, which brought the slighter body against his.

"Hug him, bear!" encouraged the throng. "Kill him, Ainu!"

It looked as if this were exactly what the pariah was doing. Baron Kumikawa had his watch in hand, mindful of his bets and waiting to give the order which would result in Koropok lifting the prisoner and hurling him from the ring.

Davies said in the other American's ear, "Listen. I'm Llewellyn Davies. Here on duty. Believe me. I've got to go through with this. When it's over, you're going to speak into a mike. I want you to say—"

The prisoner squirmed desperately, trying to free an arm. He could not. "Go to hell," he said.

"When you're given what you've got to say," said Lew, pounding his feet as if anxious to end the struggle, "add this sentence. Say, 'Davies was right, Andy.' Say that. 'Davies was right, Andy.' That's all."

"Go to hell!"

As Kumikawa shouted that which would send the prisoner across the thick rope on the floor and out of the ring, and Koropok's grip tightened, Davies said, "Don't be a damned fool! If the Nips wanted you to say that, it'd be in the script they give you. And don't make a mistake. They may kill you for what you add. But it'll be on the way to G-2. . . . Now I've got to give you the works."

Kumikawa was chattering; if Koropok delayed, the bets would be lost. The crowd was shrieking and yowling. For one fleeting, infinitesimal ticking of time, black American eyes and blue American eyes met.

Then, "O. K., boy," whispered the blond prisoner. "Davies?"

"Davies," said Lew. "Thanks, kid."

He lifted his fellow-American; he slung him out of the ring. But before he was himself able to leave, the baron had scrambled up and stood beside him.

"You are now to be accorded a great honor, Koropok," he said. "You are to be allowed to wrestle Hana-arashi, a great champion. Oh,

"Don't try to put anything over, Lieutenant," warned Tokyo Rose, as Fitz stepped reluctantly to the mike.

how fortunate you are, Koropok! What a wonderful chance for you!"

A chance to be torn apart, Davies knew only too well.

Would the American called Fitz say those four words into the mike, which, when monitored, would be the tip-off to G-2? Did the kid believe that the stocky, bearded pariah was also an American, disguised, on duty? If Fitz didn't, Davies couldn't blame him. But he prayed, *he willed him to believe.*

RADIO Tokyo's official, Tsumuri, was in the ring. The young blond prisoner, after having been doused with cold water, stood naked and dripping beside the scrawny Japanese, with both Tokyo Rose and the male renegade near him. The mike was raised so as to be at the proper height for the *Amerika-jin* prisoner.

Davies, squatting wrestler-fashion, heard Tokyo Rose say, as the audience was quieted, "Have some sense, Lieutenant. If you refuse to read the script into the microphone, you will be tried for insubordination, and you know what a trial means here. Your head. Be nice and do your stuff."

The prisoner shook off the hand which she placed on his forearm.

"If you refuse," said Tokyo Rose, "the rations of every American prisoner of war will be cut in half."

"What do you want me to read?" asked the prisoner.

The male renegade handed Fitz a sheet of paper, at which he stared. His head shook slowly in refusal, slowly as if wavering. His eyes wandered slowly, taking in the strange scene.

When they reached Davies' black ones, they seemed to light, and his tight lips loosened for a fleeting second in the most fragmentary of grins.

"I guess I've got to do it," the young flying officer said wearily.

"Don't try to put anything over," Tokyo Rose warned. "A record is made of what you say. The *record* is broadcast. If you get funny, Lieutenant, another recording will be made. After that, you will be properly punished, of course."

Davies knew despair. The Japanese would never permit the broadcasting of a word which was not in the script. He himself hadn't figured on anything but a live broadcast, going directly over the air.

"I want to add something," the prisoner said quietly, looking up from the sheet of paper in his hand. "I'd like to say, 'Davies was right, Andy.'"

Tokyo Rose snapped, "Why?" while Tsumuri listened.

"Davies is an officer friend of mine," said the prisoner, emphasizing the word friend, "who said that Japan couldn't be attacked by air."

Before Tokyo Rose could turn to Tsumuri, the radio official said, "*Sonnara yoroshi.* In that case, it is all right."

"American boys," said Tokyo Rose into the now live mike, "wherever you may be, this is Rose, an American girl just like those girls of yours at home who are being stolen by the

4F's. And I want to introduce to you Lieutenant Bill Fitzhugh, a boy who was shot down in combat, who didn't have a chance against superior odds and superior skill and superior planes . . ."

And then Davies heard Fitzhugh's quiet, distinctive voice, which would be identified at home as being truly his; heard the young lieutenant admitting, from the script, the strength of even the pariahs in Japan, men not considered good enough to be in the Imperial army or navy; and, at the end, heard Fitzhugh's slow voice, as the script read, "We can't win, fellows."

Then, as Tokyo Rose smiled at him, he added distinctly, as levelly as before, "Davies was right, Andy."

Tsumuri and Baron Kumikawa were so delighted with Fitzhugh's performance that, as a reward, he and the two other prisoners of war were told that they might watch a true Japanese champion of the ring, Hana-arashi, in action.

Although the pavilion blazed with light, its windows covered lest a gleam attract the long-feared bombers, traditional lamps were lighted atop each of the pillars in honor of the champion.

The audience sighed and leaned forward. Oh, what a sight they were going to see! Oh, this was something!

Tubs of water and bowls of salt were placed at the bases of the east and west pillars. A different umpire mounted to the ring, a Japanese whose fan's handle was tufted with crimson silk, indicating that he was of first rank, as a wrestler of Hana-arashi's class deserved. The *yobidashi*, crier, followed him, and immediately began to shout Hana-arashi's history of victories.

Then Davies saw the ponderous Japanese wrestler climb up and into the ring. A big man, his combed-back hair and top-knot glistening with camellia oil, his apron, of white silk, embroidered in gold and green, with a heavy gold fringe sighing metallically around his thick ankles.

The wrestler's countenance seemed stupid and dull; but the little eyes set deep in the round brown face were keen and alert and as black as rare tomb-jade. Hana-arashi's three hundred pounds of body was round like an elephant's, and there would be terrible strength in the short heavy arms and the strangely developed big, projecting belly. Around it was the plaited wrestler's rope.

It won't be long now, thought Davies. *The less opposition he gets, the easier it will be on me.* But he doubted whether Kumikawa wanted it that way. *I'll probably get the works,* he said to himself.

When Hana-arashi purified his mouth, the crowd roared. When he spat, the throng screamed. When he sprinkled pinches of salt over his belly, the Japanese women became ecstatic. And when the Ainu did everything wrong, excited laughter rolled up to the rooftop.

Kumikawa was going to draw the match out as long as possible, Lew realized, when the baron began whispering to him. Davies, watching his opponent, decided that this wasn't going to happen.

He had completed his job. To hell with giving the damned Nips a show. If Intelligence picked up what was to be broadcast, he had done as important a thing as was possible. Nobody had a right to insist that he become entertainment for Japan, for the small brown apes, as the Chinese called them.

"Hana-arashi will come out raging," whispered the baron. "He will come close, and push his belly at you. When you fear that it will push you out of the ring, he will reach behind you to grasp your belt. It is at that moment that you must slip quickly to the right. Remember now!"

"I will remember," said Koropok.

HANA-ARASHI'S disciple wrestler who accompanied him had removed the magnificent apron. The champion stood with legs spraddled and raised his arms high above his head. He shouted, "*Yoh! Yoh!*" and brought his powerful hands down crosswise over his belly, where they thudded as if on a drum.

He was ready. His lips curled back disdainfully.

"On the east, the great champion Hana-arashi," cried the umpire, fan waving in a circle. "On the west, what? Koropok the Ainu!" Down came the fan.

Instinctively, after the long rigorous training, Davies met the sudden charge of the big Japanese and gave to it. He heard, or thought he heard, above the din of screams and shrill, venomous shouts, the words, "Get him, boy!" But this could have been his imagination, and not the voice of a half-starved but still defiant prisoner of war.

The camellia oil's scent was overwhelmed by the odor of Hana-arashi's sweating body. Davies heard the baron's shouts; he heard the squeals of the umpire and of Hana-arashi's disciples, all big men; he heard the wrestler's exhaled, "*Yoh!*" as the ring shook to the three-hundred-pounder's feet.

He felt Hana-arashi's enormous belly touching his own; he replied with proper, automatic foot-movement. The Japanese' stubby arms would be slyly seeking a belthold. If Hana-arashi failed in the grip, which was what Kumikawa, betting on time, intended, there would be a second hold, more crippling, and a

third and a fourth, each designed to maim and torture.

The audience was becoming crazed with the sight of complete Japanese domination, of Japanese size, of Japanese superiority, of Japanese courage.

Something deep stirred in Davies. Something not to be resisted. He did slip to the right. He saw the glitter of Hana-arashi's eyes as the wrestler's fingertips touched the belt. Then, with his own feet planted firmly, with the muscles of his legs like iron, with Hana-arashi's face inches from his own, Davies' right shoulder drooped slightly. His right hand balled to a fist and, without pause, he brought it up in one fierce, terrible blow against the Japanese' chin.

He moved back as if pushed back. Hana-arashi seemed to be following him, while the audience goggled because the pariah had escaped the famous hold. But the Japanese' second step was his last. Eyes blank, he fell face forward, hit belly-downward, and slowly rolled from the very impact to his back.

Koropok stood as if dazed by what had happened; the pavilion was so quiet that the sound of a lamp's sputter was like a machine gun. Then Hana-arashi's disciple wrestlers, first to recover among the startled spectators, swarmed over the pariah all at once.

Darkness came to Davies mercifully soon.

What took place between that time and the dragging of Koropok back to Number Nineteen was never clear. The next thing he knew, he was kenneled in his hole beside the kitchen, valuable to Suriga only because he was cheap and no able-bodied Japanese could be had for Nineteen's dirty work.

Sometimes guests at Nineteen would be escorted to see this pariah who had been in the ring with Hana-arashi at a time when the champion wrestler was assailed by a momentary sickness; that was the story. Tokyo did laugh at the account of how Baron Kumikawa lost thousands of yen, being unable to persuade those men with whom he had wagered that Hana-arashi's strange illness should have canceled all bets.

Tokyo soon forgot this. The story was being whispered that now American battleships had thundered against the Philippines. But this fact, to the Supreme Command, only meant that the arrogant enemy was being coaxed nearer Japan, where before long an over-confident American fleet, like Russia's fleet in the past, would be at the mercy of the lurking Imperial Japanese Navy . . .

Davies was hobbling painfully about on the night when the admiral entertained at Number Nineteen.

It was Davies, carrying his bowls and bottles, who first saw one of the admiral's aiguilletted aides rush in from the street, brushing aside the maid at the entrance. Davies knew, as he saw the desperation on the aide's face, that something had happened. And he knew from the single agonized word which came, muffled, from the room where the admiral was informed of the news, what it must be.

"Tsushima!"

And it was Koropok the Ainu, the pariah, who later scrubbed the blood from the matting in the room where the admiral had performed *seppuku*—a fact which, like the bombing of the battle fleet, could not be kept forever from the Japanese people. It took a lot of scrubbing; but this was a labor of love.

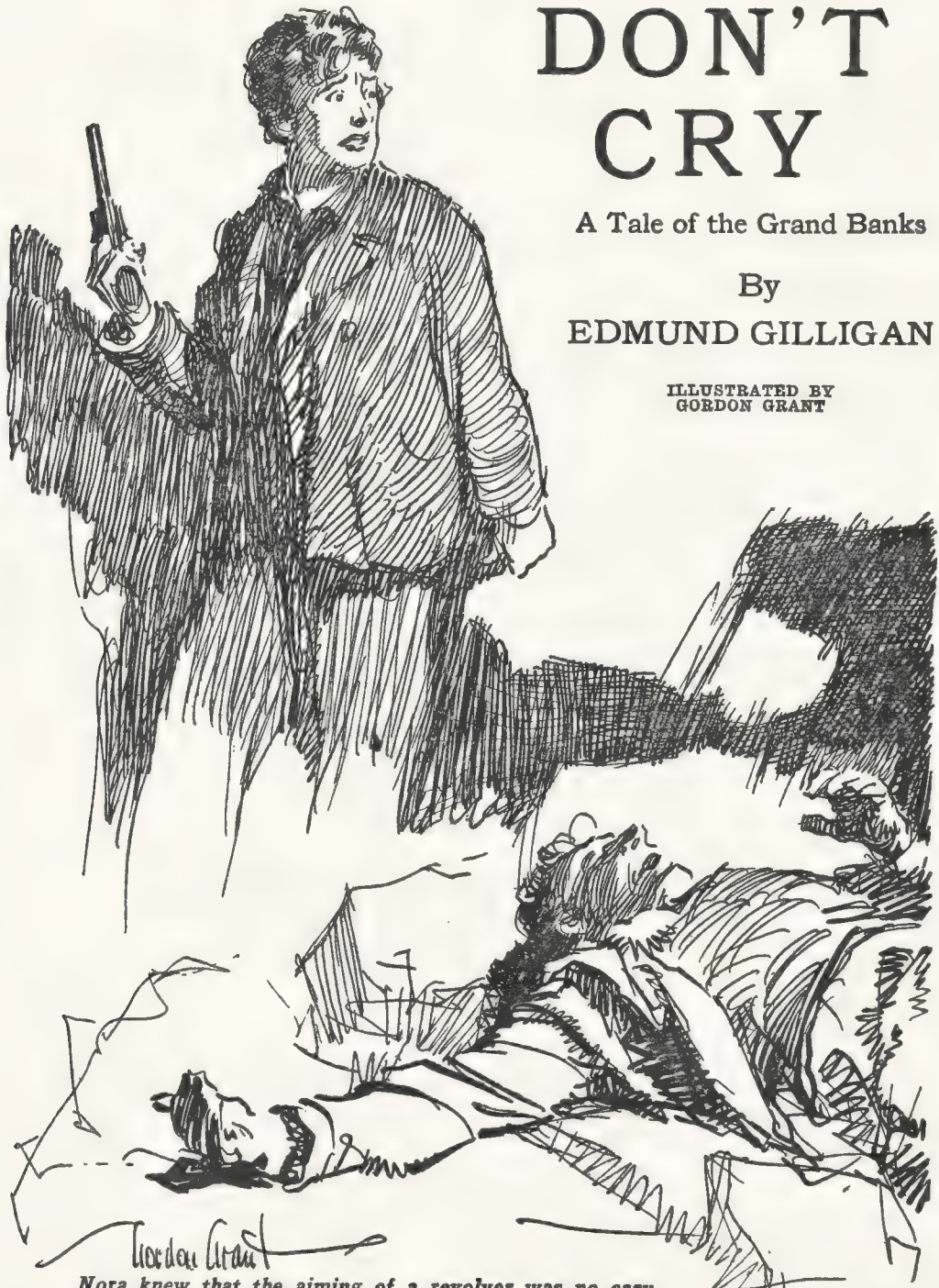
CAPTAINS DON'T CRY

A Tale of the Grand Banks

By

EDMUND GILLIGAN

ILLUSTRATED BY
GORDON GRANT



Nora knew that the aiming of a revolver was no easy thing when two men were so closely locked together.

THE STORY THUS FAR:

CAPTAIN DAN HARDEGON brings the *Moon Hawk* home to Gloucester with her catch—he has skippered the dragger for one voyage to the fishing banks while her regular captain recovers from an accident—to find himself in the middle of a tense situation.

The *Golden Hind,* last topsail schooner out of Gloucester to fish by hand from dories, returns after an unlucky voyage with an almost empty hold. Her captain, JACK ROADES, reports to the owner of the *Hind,* NORA DOONAN, whom he expects to marry, that one of his crew, JAMES CORKERY, has drowned on the Banks. The dead man's brother JOHN, also of the *Hind's* crew, blames the death on Roades, curses

captain and ship and refuses to sail aboard her again. Hardegon, who ill conceals his own love for Nora, tries to persuade her to convert the *Hind* to power but she and Roades rebuff him and refuse his gift of a large-mesh manila net he has woven. Hardegon tries to tell them that such men as PARRAN, who skippers the big dragger *Doubloon* for a Boston firm, are ruining the fishing grounds with their small-mesh nets, but Nora won't heed him because she owes Parran money and must borrow more from him if her schooner is to make even one more voyage. She knows also that Roades wants her to sell the *Hind* to Parran.

HOWEVER, Nora has an ace up her sleeve in the rotting hulk of the old *Western Star* which lies in Shelburne, Nova Scotia. There is a fortune in lead in her keel which the government needs and Nora determines to get it by hook or crook to pull herself out of the red. She enlists the aid of AMBROSE CAMERON and four other old dorymen who love the *Hind* and served aboard her under Nora's grandfather. She tells Hardegon of her plan and he persuades her to keep it secret from everyone, even Roades to whom she is engaged, but particularly Parran whom he knows will stop at nothing to doublecross her.

Making ready for the voyage to Shelburne, the *Hind* is berthed beside Parran's big dragger. Nora manages to borrow again from the *Doubloon's* captain but has trouble getting a crew together. John Corkery, still nursing his hate for Roades, goes after the *Hind's* skipper with a knife but Hardegon stops the fight and attempts to persuade Corkery to sail, offers to go dorymate with him if he will—a startling offer for a captain to make but Hardegon has made up his mind he must be on the *Hind* at any cost to protect Nora. Corkery seems about to change his mind and sail when Parran intrudes to make a suggestion.

He offers to take Corkery on his own vessel in exchange for one of the *Doubloon's* crew, BILLY ATKINS, who has a none too savory reputation now, after his association with Parran, though he used to be a good fisherman. Nora is reluctant to hire the man, but Hardegon realizes that it will mean getting a friend aboard the *Doubloon*, for he knows that despite Corkery's hate for Roades, he is essentially loyal to Nora and the *Hind*. Hardegon says he'll go dorymate with Atkins and the man comes aboard the *Hind*.

When they dock at Shelburne, Roades thinks it is just to take on bait. He goes ashore and Nora starts out, after giving Ambrose his instructions, to beard the money-shark, BANNISTER, who doesn't realize he has a fortune in the keel of the old *Western Star* that lies rotting in his yard.

With the help of old Ambrose, who pretends he is a senile multimillionaire yachtsman wanting to buy the *Western Star* for sentimental reasons, Nora makes the purchase before Bannister knows he's been taken. The crew of the *Hind* quickly puts the ancient hulk in shape and Ambrose and the four old dorymen start to sail her back to Gloucester as the *Hind* puts out for the Grand Banks. Neither Parran nor Roades conceal their fury at the way Nora has made her first step to get out of debt by acquiring the *Star's* keel.

In the meantime, the LISBON, an old Portuguese doryman on the *Hind* who is completely loyal to the schooner and Nora, tells the girl of an episode in Roades' past. He and Parran, years before in Yarmouth, have shared the same woman a waterfront slut, who was later found murdered with a bonehandled knife in her back. The implication is that Roades' committed the murder and Parran is covering up for him because Roades owes him money. Nora, sickened by the revelation, turns more and more from Roades to Hardegon, the man she is beginning to realize she really loves.

A terrific storm blows up and it's all the *Hind* can do to weather the gale. At its height the lookout, between flurries of snow, sees the helpless, drifting wreck of the *Western Star*, blown far off her course, and Nora believes that the *Star* is doomed along with the old men aboard her.

The *Hind* finally reaches the fishing banks, with the *Doubloon* following on her trail. Hardegon and Atkins, whom the crew regard as a Jonah, go out in a dory to set buoys and Hardegon baits Atkins about a dream he says he's had in which he's seen Parran, Roades, Atkins and Corkery all hanging from a yardarm, and warns Atkins about the penalties of committing crimes at sea. The superstitious Atkins is terrified and reveals that he knows of criminal plans aboard the dragger, though exactly what form they may take Hardegon doesn't learn.

Excellent fishing is found and it looks like the *Hind's* luck has turned at last as her pens begin to fill. Instead of being glad, however, Roades is obviously sore about it and sulks. Nora tells the crew of the *Hind*, all but Atkins, that dirty work from Parran is bound to be in the offing, that Roades is Parran's man, and she declares open war on the *Doubloon*.

Under the cover of fog, the *Doubloon* cuts all the *Hind's* mark-buoys, setting all her trawl adrift. The dragger hawls in her nets while standing alongside the *Hind*, and all see that the trawl has been picked up in them, to Parran's delight. He taunts Nora, and the *Hind's* crew, in rage, throw Atkins overboard and the *Doubloon* rescues him. When night falls Roades sneaks off in a dory to the *Doubloon*, and Hardegon, Nora, Clem and the Lisbon follow him in another dory. Hardegon boards the *Doubloon* and from a hiding-place sees

Corkery and Atkins get into a fight in which Atkins is killed when he falls against some fast-moving cables. Roades appears and knifes Corkery, who is carried overboard by heavy seas before Hardegon can interfere.

Hardegon and Nora then approach Roades and Parran, pretending to know nothing of the two deaths, and ask for their trawl. Parran tells them both deaths were accidental and agrees to let Nora take the trawl back to the *Hind*, which she does, with Clem and the Lisbon. Hardegon stays on the *Doubloon*, planning to return with Roades, and helps haul in one of the nets. Parran "accidentally" lets the tons of fish fall on him, hoping to kill him, but Hardegon escapes and finds Corkery's body with Roades's knife in it, in the pile of fish. He takes the knife and hides it before showing the others the body. Unable to refuse Hardegon's request, Parran permits the body to be taken aboard the *Hind*, where Hardegon keeps it as evidence. Nora gives Hardegon command of the *Hind* and, with Roades virtually a prisoner, they set sail for Misaine, where an old map belonging to Nora's grandfather shows halibut is to be found, unknown to modern fishermen. Before they leave the Middle Grounds, however, Nora burns signal torches to guide the *Western Star* if she is still afloat. Still followed by the *Doubloon*, they reach Misaine, where they make a tremendous hawl —over ten thousand dollars' worth of halibut.

CONCLUSION

ALL this time, the *Doubloon* had kept her position astern. She now closed up in the moonlight, her port light gleaming. Word of her nearness passed among the men in whispers, yet no great alarm was felt. They had their fish aboard and no dragger could rob them of the fish on the bottom; for there was never a net made that could handle great halibut.

For these reasons, they soon ignored the *Doubloon*. Yet it seemed, for a while, that she meant to speak the *Hind*. She came up within a cable length. There, without a signal, she swiftly changed course. Her engine loudened into full speed. Her screw beat the water hard and she sped off into the northeast. Her lights went out. She rushed through the moon-glade and became a part of the increasing darkness beyond.

"Now then," said Hardegon to Nora, "there goes Parran! Are we rid of the dog?"

She made no answer. They were standing together in the lee of the foremast. They gazed, with newly troubled hearts, into that moonlight, a golden path shimmering and, at times, overflowing into the *Hind's* own golden pool. Two or three men, disturbed by their enemy's maneuver, came and stood by them, their eyes fixed on the glinting water beyond the glade.

This was the moment when Nora heard, or thought she heard, a faint, faraway wail drifting over the water. She leaned out and listened, striving to search out that cry above the crying of the tide-rip.

Hardegon stirred in alarm. "You hear anything?"

"I'm not sure."

A piercing cry rang out in the *Hind's* bow. The old man on watch there shouted, "Sail ho! A sail! A sail!"

"Where away? Where away, Tommy?"

He came stumbling aft, crying out and pointing into the darkness beyond the tide-rip.

The dorymen gathered at the rail. They peered into the frothy dark. No man among them spoke. And this speechlessness at the approach of a sail, drawn to them by the *Hind's* flaming beacons, became the proof to Nora that, all this time, her hope had been known to them. It had become their hope. And even now, before her misty eyes could make out that sail, her heart became brimful of her love for these men, the prosaic heroes who did a day's work in the midst of peril. The images of other such heroes came before her, while her eyes moved this way and that over the ripples of gold.

A shadow beyond became a gleam. The gleam changed into a little curl of foam under the bow of a dory. A graying space above the bow turned into a rag of sail. And along the gunwale other gleams appeared, where oars were feebly dipping, barely touching the stream, and feebly lifting again.

Once more she heard the wail, this time a little stronger, so that she seemed to be hearing a question uttered in a low voice.

She wished to speak but could not. Nor could the others. They gazed enthralled at the dory, gazed at the men crouched on her thwarts, and at the festoons of ice and frost that glittered there.

The oars ceased. The voice of an old, old man cried out, "Ahoy the schooner! Ahoy! Be that you, the *Hind?*"

She struck her hand against her mouth, as if the rough blow might force the lips to answer that hail.

It was Hardegon who answered. And all he could say was, "Come in, the dory!"

The oars struck again, harder this time, and a little sea pushed the dory onward until she glided near. One of the oars slipped into the water and the same old voice said, "Easy does it! You know that, my good man!"

The joy that now seized Nora was so fierce that she shuddered and fell back from the rail, unable to bear the lifting of the burden and the woe of guilt that she had borne since last she had heard that voice.

A painter curled across the rail. In the silence of their own joy, the *Hind's* men reached down,

holding out their hands. She saw a hand, clad in a yellow glove, reach up and close upon the Lisbon's arms. The Lisbon heaved, and at last, he stood before her—huge, frosted, indomitable—the Yankee conqueror of the gale.

He said, "Ah! Salubrious, is it not, my friends? I refer, of course, to—" A little compass fell from his hand and rolled a bit.

The dorymen heaved again and again. Four men came over and stood slouched behind the first, their heads bowed, eyes dully staring at the solid deck.

A man at the break cried harshly, "Are ye ghosts? Or men?"

Old Ambrose took a shaky step toward Nora. He struck the icy sou'wester from his head. It rolled on an unbending rim and stopped against the compass. "In a manner of speaking," he replied, his golden-lighted eyes fixed upon her face, "in a manner of speaking—men!"

EVEN then, when the old hero had taken her heart forever, she had no words for him. She made a step forward and tried to lift her arms. Her lips moved in a poor whisper. He made the step and lifted his arms so that she could move into them; and thus they embraced, the saved and the savior. She pressed her mouth into the bristle of his hollowed cheek. It was this reality of meeting, their coming together, that loosed her words. She cried out, "Ambrose! They said—they said I'd drowned you on that hulk!"

He opened his lips to answer. His mouth seemed ready to laugh. No laughter came. Instead he uttered the *Hind's* old rally. "Hard-a-lee, Cap'n Nora! Don't cry, Cap'n. Get it on her!"

He groaned and his head fell sideways sharply. "North-by-east. One hundred miles!" His great legs shook under him and he slipped from her arms. "The *Western Star!*"

He sprawled on the deck. "Couldn't stay on her. She's afloat in shoal water. Mark-buoy! Rigged it myself." He keeled over.

She wailed above him. "What! Now?"

Hardegon, kneeling by the old doryman, looked up and laughed at her fear of death. "Sound asleep, my girl! Trust Ambrose Cameron. He knows what to do!"

The dory took up Ambrose and carried him and his companions to the forecastle.

Nora grasped Hardegon by the arm. "You heard that course?"

"Aye!"

"Ten thousand dollars' worth of fish iced down and a fifteen-thousand-dollar keel beyond! We're near the saving of her!" She struck her hand against the *Hind's* rail.

"The keel's a loose-fish," said Hardegon. "Belongs to the first man who sets foot on her deck. And, by the God that made me, I'll be that one!"

He yelled at the watch and made them jump to their stations. He roared out the rallying cry and the cry went booming up and down, into the forecastle, aloft, and down again into the cabin. "All hands! All hands! Tumble up! Oh, lively now!"

They swung the mainboom out of its crotch. He shouted, "The *Doubloon!* Lay alongside that dog before daybreak and you're in the money!"

The gang roared and hauled.

Dan laughed his boastful laugh and took hold of the mainsheet to do the work of a laggard. "Fifteen thousand dollars' worth of prime lead lying on Scatari Shoal! Shares for all! The old sixty-forty lay, chums! Heave!"

"Heave! Hey! Oh, gorry! Pile it on her!"

"I'll punish her this night!"

The huge mainsail sucked up the breeze. The *Hind* trembled and splashed a little.

"Ease her! Ease her, chum!"

The foresail cried out in a thunderous voice. The *Hind* ceased her splashing and leaped. Now they spread all she had: topsails, staysail, jib and jumbo. And they trimmed her well until she lay over and drank the Atlantic up, running as she had run in her old days of racing.

The schooner sank the moon and tossed bow spray against the stars. All her standing gear sang out shrilly or sang out hoarsely. A booming sound passed up from her hold and marked swift time for her headlong passage. Captain Hardegon punished her all right, but she was the one who could take it, high seas or low; and when she plunged into the long swell left by the gale, she lifted her pace until the men roared again in pleasure at her famous qualities.

Raising his voice above the clamor of her sailing, old Clem asked Hardegon, "What's she got in the way of knots—that *Doubloon?*"

"Eleven or twelve. With eighty thousand pounds in her pens—I don't know. She'll do well enough."

"We're doing that now."

"And better if the wind holds."

This question as to the *Doubloon's* abilities left them in doubt. There was also the question of the headstart she had on the *Hind.* Were they evenly matched, that half hour of the *Doubloon's* fast going would settle the race before it began.

Hardegon and Clem agreed that it wasn't a question of a full hundred miles. Ambrose had said that was the distance, but it was their opinion that the *Western Star* lay considerably nearer. The best of men, fighting for his life in a dory, would tend to overestimate the distance he had covered, especially if the voyage had been marred by squalls and icy weather, which was certainly the case. Just the same, there was nothing to do at present except drive the *Hind* along. This they

did. Hardegon set a double watch in the bow and sent men to stay aloft as long as they could stand it.

He wished to learn more from old Ambrose. Nora told him the story. Half an hour later, she came aft and repeated to him what Ambrose had said. It was what he expected.

"She's full of water, Dan. Barely afloat. But Ambrose thinks she'll stay up. It wasn't her hull. The sou'wester simply smashed in her companionway and ripped off the main hatch. The seas poured into her. They stayed with her until she was awash. All lashed to her wheel. Then she ran into shoal water and they had to leave her. No food. No water. Lucky, he says, to get oars and a bit of sail to handle the dory. The gale blew out and they found a wind to take them back this way. He figured that his best chance of getting picked up was to steer for the place he left us."

"Cape Breton Land?"

"That wasn't the wind's way, Dan. Besides, I've a feeling that he meant to find us and lead us to the *Star,* no matter what the cost."

"Did he sight us when the *Star* was running before the gale?"

"Yes. And he said to me just now, 'It was plain to us that you'd come along after the *Star,* if you could, and that's why we came and kept looking for you with hope.' And, Dan, they saw our torches night before last—"

"Night before last!"

"Aye, and steered for them, but they were so weak from hunger that they couldn't fight it out. Squalls—one after the other—drove them back again. But it was our torches that kept them going. They knew what they were for!"

" 'Twas a smart thing you did there, my girl!"

SHE told him that, at the very end, Ambrose had sighted the *Hind's* torches again and, at the same time, they discovered the *Doubloon* coming up. Ambrose knew the ugly part that Parran and the *Doubloon* had been playing at the start of the voyage. When he saw the *Doubloon* get under way so suddenly, he guessed that Parran had figured out where the *Western Star* had been abandoned and that the precious keel was his if he could get a man aboard the hulk before the *Hind* did.

She asked, "Isn't the keel ours? Is it a loosefish, as you called it?"

He shook his head. "I'm no sea lawyer, Nora. But, at the least, it's a salvage job for him, if he gets there first. But you know he won't bother with a long tow home. What's fifteen thousand dollars to him? To us, it's life. To him, just a few bags of fish. He'll ram the *Star* just to keep her out of our hands and keep you broke."

Thus, in their shrewd talk of the race's finish, their minds came together on one thing: that Parren had no way of knowing how far the booty lay in the northeast. He was as skilled as any man in adding two to two. In this case, he hadn't the two's to add.

"Unless," said Nora, "his friend in our cabin had some way of giving him the news—which isn't likely."

"Impossible!"

Yet this turn of thought made them both realize again how profound their fear of Roades's cunning had become; and, at the same time, how much wisdom they had gathered up. They were wise enough not to slight the enemy's strength. It certainly was unreasonable for either of them to fancy that a man, asleep in the cabin of a flying schooner, could manage a communication with a vessel far ahead in the black of night. Just the same, Hardegon called one of the bow watch and said, "Go take a look at that guy below, chum. See if he's in his bunk."

This was a mistake by Hardegon. If he hadn't become skipper of the vessel, he might have gone below himself. In a way, his order was like sending a boy on a man's errand. However, Hardegon had been giving top orders for the first time in many months and, since he was a first-class sailing-master who rejoiced in the crowded sails and the stout strains on the *Hind,* he had the best part of his thought intent on the vessel's behavior. Besides, he didn't know her too well.

The actual error lay in the doryman's execution of Hardegon's order. There was no doubt that he understood its grave meaning. It isn't every crew that has to watch a man as they would a maniac. Nevertheless, an ancient way of doing things served them far from well now.

The old way was a time-saver. It saved seconds when seconds meant a bagged-up sail or a stove-in bow. This saving was often accomplished by means of symbols and such devices. The glass was one. A glance at it might keep a man off an icy deck. Sounds were also symbols. A constant, hollow booming when the empty *Hind* was going off the wind pierced the men's slumber and told them that she was doing all right. So, too, various sounds passed over her deck with her down-draft. All had meanings, one way or the other.

A man's boots, for another instance, had become a symbol, one that lived in the subconsciousness of the dorymen. It was a risk of death to set an unshod foot on that wintry deck. They were all acquainted with frostbite and knew Buerger's disease, long before Buerger did. Taking away a doryman's cowhide boots, which protected him halfway to the knee, was like taking a man's horse on the old frontier. Boots were always at the edge of a man's bunk, ready to be pulled on even before his eyes had opened for the "All hands!" call.

The watch, then, pushed back the companionway slide and thrust his head down into the dimness. He closed the slide and reported to Hardegon, "I saw him sound asleep. Drunk again, I guess."

Actually he hadn't seen Roades at all. He had merely looked at his boots. These, as usual, were placed handy.

The report satisfied Nora and Hardegon. It even made them hungry, because there was an element of relief in it. They went down into the galley for a mug-up. There was a good deal of sleeping going on in the forecastle. Hardegon passed up to the peak, looking into the bunks on either hand. He found Ambrose and his men doubled up. They were breathing in new life and strength at a fine rate.

Nora took down a pair of mugs from the rack and poured tea from the great kettle. Dan made up an astonishing sandwich from the pantry, cut it in two, and took out a platter of cake. They ate in silence and listened shrewdly to the cracking, roaring noise of the *Hind's* flight.

Hardegon said, "I'm going aloft to trouble the watch. You turn in. I'll call you if there's a break."

"It's too cold for a watch aloft," said Nora.

"Not yet it isn't. But that's what I'm going to settle. They'll come down if I can't stand it."

She went aft. The deck was dark, because the *Hind's* lights had been taken down to hide her from the *Doubloon*. There was only the glow out of her cabin skylight to guide her as she went slowly along.

CHAPTER XIV

THE LOOSE-FISH

HARDEGON climbed into the main weather rigging and ascended carefully, stopping now and then to scan the sails and to search the black sea for the gleam of a mark-buoy. He had in mind the probability that the clockwise tide might seize the *Western Star* and carry her to meet the *Hind*. In all the vast expanse which now lay open to his eye, no light showed. A few stars embroidered the west. In the east, where daybreak soon would shine, an enormous cloud rolled. The *Hind's* wake satisfied him. There was no splashing under her bow.

He climbed to the crosstrees and struck the watch's boot. The watch bent down from the sky.

Hardegon shouted, "'Tisn't too cold, chum?"

"Not yet it ain't!"

"Come down when it is."

"I will that, Dan."

"I was thinking that the tide might have swung the *Star* westward. Might be nearer than the old boy figured."

"Slow work, Dan!"

"Aye! True for you!"

The doryman straightened in his perch.

Hardegon lay there in the shrouds, rejoicing, as always, in the beauty and strength of the slim hull below him. Even in that rush of darkness, he could see flashes of color from her runways and her inner bulwarks. The glow in the skylight made it seem like a panel of jewels. The *Hind* swayed at her work and gave him an airy plunge up and down. He locked a leg into her shrouds and peered ahead. He saw the crest of a roller crease the black and come leaping toward the schooner. He heard its loudening bray. This sea was a gear-smasher. Its hurtling attack, which would bring it on the weather bow, gave him a quick concern for the vessel. It wiped the grin off his face. At precisely the right moment, the helmsman gave the *Hind* a spoke or two and, in swift obedience, she split the sea in two, crashed through it with nothing more than a dainty shake which came up lightly to his clinging hands.

"Well done, the *Hind!*" he said aloud.

The boarding sea whitened her deck. She cleared herself and flew on. A hand struck at his boot.

He twisted down. It was Nora, shouting to him. Her face gave off such an icy gleam, beneath the brim of her sou'wester, that he knew she had paled with terror. He couldn't come down to her side. He shouted and thrust his boot out. She began to descend and he to follow. He slid from the swifters and stood by her side.

She clung to him and cried out, "Roades! He's gone!"

"Over?"

"I don't know! That doryman—"

"What!"

"He never looked into the bunk. Saw the boots there. But he's gone!"

"In the galley?"

"No!"

Hardegon drew her close and said, "He's killed himself. Over the side. Clem said he would one day. Saw the noose, he did!"

She shook her head. "Not that one! Not while he has a chance left."

Hardegon cried, "The pen!"

At this, she nodded and cried out a word that the wind snatched. It had been her thought, too. Yet she hadn't dared to face that possibility alone.

He ran to the main hatch. It hadn't been touched since the men closed it over the halibut. Yet this had no meaning. On the *Hind* there was another way of getting into the pens. This was from the cabin. There was a bulkhead leading from the cabin to the small after-hold and a second bulkhead which opened into a gangway between the pens. In most other schooners, this small after-hold had been made

into an engine-room. The *Hind* kept it as a sort of lazaret. There was a sail-locker there, too, and some accommodations left over from racing days. However, this inner bulkhead hadn't been opened for some time. Its chief use had been to get men into the pens when ice was making on her deck. In a way, that bulkhead served the same purpose as manholes on larger sailing vessels.

Hardegon lifted the cover and bade her hold it. He thrust his head over the coamings and looked down.

"All dark so far."

She tried to thrust the old revolver into his hand.

As before, on the expedition to the *Doubloon*, he rejected it. "I'd shoot myself. I'm going to break his skull open with this!" He flung up his clenched hand.

"I'll keep it. I'll go, too."

"You must come. You must see and remember. Keep out of the way, that's all. Give me a whack at that buck. But kill him! Kill him, if you must. A slug in the belly!"

They went down the steel rungs. Here, between Number One pen and Number Two, they could see the length of the hold. What they saw was enough to stop them. The inner bulkhead wasn't particularly tight. A film of yellow light played under it, waxed and waned amidst a sort of smoky vapor that came off the ice. A clearer ray of light, this time from an auger hole, shot down from the upper panel of the bulkhead.

It was plain that somebody was at work on the after side of that bulkhead.

"You hear anything, Nora?"

"No!"

"He's not in here yet."

"No, Dan. Nearer. Get nearer."

They moved slowly out of the pen and went into Number Four. It was partly filled with halibut, which had been well iced-down. Hardegon pushed her up onto the layer of fish. She crouched there. He crouched by her side, his head in the passageway so that he could see the bulkhead. Although they were only eight feet nearer to the light, they could now hear quite clearly the blows of a maul. At times the boom of the schooner, when she steered into a roller, drowned this hammering. Once, when the helmsman was caught by a freakish sea, the *Hind* fell off and the light went out.

"Must have dropped off a hook!" whispered Hardegon.

About ten minutes passed before the bulkhead swung open. A considerable thickness of crushed ice had fallen against it. This ice delayed the full opening several more minutes. At last, the ice was pushed back and the whole passageway filled suddenly with the light of a lantern.

Hardegon drew back. He struck Nora lightly on the shoulder to warn her.

THE wavering light grew brighter as its bearer approached. There was no hesitation on his part. The circle of light came right up to the pen in which they were hidden; then it turned into Number Three pen.

Roades rammed the lantern handle into a crack between two boards of the pen. He knelt by the body of Corkery and began to untie the trawl lines which had been lashed around the canvas. At the first untyings, his back was turned to Hardegon, who thus could see only the rusty fingers flashing back and forth. When the lines fell away from the lower part of the body, he changed his position. He straddled the body. This gave Hardegon and Nora a full look at his face: wracked, distorted, yet cold in its intensity of purpose.

Corkery had been laid out on his back. The men had not been able to move his hands. They were held upward in that same gesture of supplication. Nor had that unspeakable face changed. Nothing had been taken from the sorrowful indictment that it had sent up to its murderer before. The eyes gazed upward in unaltered, pitiful force. Few men could have withstood this spectre, which had persisted through death and icy seas and the *Doubloon's* crushing net to make its accusation again, here in the mellow light of its old sea-home.

Roades withstood the gaze. He cursed. The schooner lurched clumsily and his knees shifted on the layer of ice. He waited until she had settled down.

He struck at the mouth savagely and said one word. "Gabber!"

A certain feverishness then seized him as he took up his search for the one thing that would save him and Parran from the noose of their dreams. He ripped the canvas away with violent movements of his arms. He roughly turned the body over and ripped the slicker and the shirts away. Thus he laid clear the wound he had made in Corkery's back, the wound where his own knife had found the doryman's heart.

"It's gone!"

The blue swath of the wound and the torn, frozen flesh meant nothing to him. He had come there for his Miquelon knife. He meant to destroy it and the body together.

He cursed again. He then passed his hands under the corpse and began to lift it.

Hardegon drew the Miquelon knife out of his boot and strode into the pen. He shouted, "Roades!"

Roades sank to his knees and let his burden fall. When his insane face turned upward, Hardegon said, "You looking for this?"

He held the knife in the palm of his right hand.

This time, the grotesque eye in the gargoyle's head on its handle stared at Roades, and the stare, revealed in the lantern's glow, somehow seemed arch, mysterious, even gay.

Hardegon stepped backward to gain time for his words. He won it.

Roades came up in a dreadful, slow straightening of his legs. He lifted his hands, in that same slow measure, to his own throat, where the fingers began to fumble. His eyes, which at first had sent a golden gaze over those fingers, changed into a redder hue, as if his blood had burst its vessels.

Hardegon said, "Listen! Nora and I saw you murder John Corkery at Parran's command. Clem and the Lisbon know who made that wound, and what knife made it. I found the body in the *Doubloon's* bag and wrenched this knife out of it. And hid it here!" He let his hand fall toward his boot. "Nora Doonan, Clem and the Lisbon know all this. Atkins told me that you three had killed the Yarmouth woman." He spat. "You and Parran will hang!"

Roades screamed and leaped over the body.

Hardegon flung the knife down and met the charge with a blow on the jaw that stood him up, big as he was. Hardegon drove both his fists against the other's ribs until Roades screamed again and flung out his arms to drag Hardegon down. Hardegon stepped strongly into the embrace, not fearing the other's strength; and there, just before the arms and hands grasped him, he struck against the jaw with his left hand. The jaw-bone broke. Blood spurted from Roades's nostrils and flowed from his bitten lips.

Yet Roades had vast sums of courage and strength, and a terrible fate to goad him. And he was a knife-fighter, full of Canuck trickery. He yelled fearfully, in their fashion, and struck Hardegon in the belly with his knee. The belly was hard, but not hard enough to take that assault without a flinching of the whole body. Hardegon flinched and, in that expected change, Roades hurled his whole weight against him, heaved him against the side of the pen with terrible force.

Hardegon lifted his fists and his right knee. He was in error there. He knew that Roades had no taste for fighting with fists. Hands were broken that way and livelihoods lost. Roades required steel. He lurched across the pen and, in the very act of whirling to attack again, he picked up the knife, so foolishly disdained by Hardegon.

"Now, you son-of-a-whore!"

Bawling the Grand Banks epithet, Roades sprang, knife held in the classic style of the outward sweep. He caught Hardegon standing on one foot. The foot, being booted, gave way on the crackling ice. This brought Hardegon out of his poise and left him only one way of defense. He closed one hand on Roades's knife-hand and closed the other on the fingers that now pressed against his windpipe. He could not bring his strength to bear against Roades's strength because his thighs and legs helped him not at all. He could beat back the fingers at his throat only by allowing the knife-hand to come nearer.

Thus they were locked and, amidst the booming of the *Hind's* passage, each man strained to break the lock.

The knife-hand slowly won the bloody see-saw. Nothing could halt its downward thrust, its approach to Hardegon's throat, hairbreadth by hairbreadth. The cursing ceased. Only blood and foam came from their bruised lips.

Neither did Nora speak. She knew that the aiming of a revolver was no easy thing to do, especially when two big men were thus embraced. She came within four feet of Roades before she pressed the trigger.

COMPRESSED in that tiny space, the explosion was awful. She was never to know whether the bullet had found its mark, his straining back. Roades screamed again, making an extraordinary noise for the mouth of a man. The knife fell from his hand and he tottered backward. Stranger still, he gazed in horror directly at Hardegon, even gazed at his hands, as if he thought the revolver had been held in one of them all this time.

Nora pressed back the hammer of the revolver and took a step forward. She raised the revolver and, at the same time, bent down and seized the knife. She flung it behind her, flung it far into the other pen.

She shouted a warning to Roades. "Now are you for it?"

This time he looked at her. He howled like a beast. He fell back another step. He raised his hands to his eyes in a blinding gesture to screen them from an image of himself that even he could not bear. He lifted his bare foot and plunged forward. He staggered into the open passageway. There he howled again. The weird accent mingled with the hollow accent of the *Hind*. He fell and rose again, howling his grief and terror. He stumbled against the steel ladder of the hatchway and climbed to the deck, where the first green light of dawn was striking the spray.

Hardegon followed. Nora came after. They reached the deck in time to see Roades, his hands still over his face, run howling to the rail. He flung himself over it. They saw his blond, shaggy head whirl brightly in the icy tide. A wreath of foam, laced with blue and green, struck his head. He vanished.

There had been light enough for the four men on deck to see Roades plunge to his death. The two on watch in the bow had heard his howling. The helmsman hadn't heard because of the wind. He had seen the dive.

The doryman on watch amidships might have stopped Roades had he been a stride nearer. He was one of the elders, however, and had neither the strength nor the agility for such a task. There was also some question whether

he would have saved Roades, had he been able. In his later testimony, he said that the expression on the captain's face was really terrifying. He used the phrase, "I was too froze to lift a hand." At that later time, too, he made an astonishing statement. He declared that Captain Rhoades was blind when he killed himself, that he actually could not see. The doryman was never able to explain his conviction. He merely repeated, quite stubbornly, that he knew a blind man when he saw one. The bullet hadn't blinded him. The court of inquiry found it in the *Hind's* hull. It was supposed that the bullet had wounded him.

Hardegon himself, as he stood at the surging rail, had no strong desire to prevent the suicide. It would have been inhuman, even if there had been a chance of rescue. There was no chance. The water was cold enough to paralyze a man. And Roades, of course, couldn't swim at all. On that score, his story had always been the old Gloucester one: "Why learn? It just takes that much longer to drown!"

Yet, on the chance that Roades might have struck a bit of wreckage, Hardegon brought the *Hind* around briskly and sailed two miles. He understood that the court of inquiry would be gratified to hear of this.

When he gave up the search and swung back on the old course, he looked for Nora. The helmsman pointed to the cabin. He found her there, stretched in her bunk, her eyes closed, tears on her cheeks. He didn't speak to her, having in mind that, not long since, the lost man had been dear to her.

In Roades's bunk, he found another drained bottle and, near it, the cocked revolver, where she had flung it. He let the hammer of the gun down and put it back in its box. The captain's boots were on the locker, where the doryman had seen them. Hardegon put them out of sight and went to the deck.

The *Hind* had sailed on that course since the setting of the moon. It was now full sunrise and she still plugged along handsomely, although the wind had hauled into the west a bit more than she liked. It was possible to come to a judgment on the good or bad of all this sailing. As the daylight spread, they searched the blue water ahead for a sign of the *Doubloon*. A vessel was sighted several miles to the northeast. She was made out to be either a warship or a Coast Guard cutter. Her course lay toward the *Hind*.

Hardegon said, "We'll speak her."

They let the *Hind* fall onto the other tack and drove along. One of the topmastmen sent down the surprising word, "Dragger astern!"

A moment later, the watch aloft made out this vessel, which had been working through scattered pan ice and some vapor. He sang out. "The *Doubloon* coming up!" and, "Coming up fast!"

The stern-chase had ended in the night, unbeknownst to the *Hind*. Of course, Parran didn't know exactly where to search for the *Western Star*. He had to give the *Hind* a chance to lead him to the position. He had slowed down his engine with the intention of making a dash for it as soon as the *Hind* had found the hulk. The rate at which he closed the gap between them showed that, under these conditions, the *Doubloon* was the faster. The wind was jumping around again. There was no telling what it would be doing when the hardest sailing would be called for.

It was Nora who spoke against the too-simple plan of just barging ahead. She had been watching the strange vessel in the northeast. Old Clem said to her, "My guess is that she's one of the old Coast Guard cutters."

The Lisbon, who had been in the bow, said that this was right.

"Then," said Nora, "there's the law and I want it." She spoke to Hardegon. "You said you'd speak that vessel, Dan."

"We will."

"I don't want to be alone any more," she said.

"I have enough!" cried the Lisbon sharply. "The law is good. The law is there!" He flung his hand out toward the cutter.

Hardegon said, "Take the wheel. Take over."

The Lisbon put his hands on the spokes.

HARDEGON went below and presently returned with a brace of rolled signal flags under his arm. He unknotted them, tied them to the signal halyard and hoisted: "Stand by. We require assistance."

Somebody said, "What's that cutter doing up here, anyway? She's making knots."

Hardegon replied, "Going home, most likely. From Iceland, maybe. Or convoy work."

"Will she stand by?"

He grinned. "Don't make me laugh, chum! The whole Guard's *Hind*-crazy, anyway. They'd come along, even if it wasn't their duty. Wait till they make out our topsails. There are no others on the Banks today."

Ambrose Cameron came a-rolling down the deck. He was gay. "A mere snack, my friends! Just a mug-up in passing, as it were." This was an allusion to his wonderful breakfast, which is now a historical fact, especially the five beefsteaks.

The Lisbon looked up into that scarred and ruddy face, held high again. "Little boy, you like to steer big ship, eh?" There was more than simple fun in the Lisbon's offer. He knew Ambrose had been a famous sailing-master and that a long time had passed since he had had his hands on a wheel like the *Hind's*.

Ambrose held up his hands in polite dismay. He still wore his yellow gloves. "What a gross suggestion, my dear man, to a gentleman out for his post-prandial stroll! With gloves and stick—my word! Where is my stick?"

He looked to leeward in wonderful surprise.

"Take off pretty gloves, little greenhorn," said the Lisbon, "and do some work. You been loafing too long. North-north-east. Steer an *S*, if you please, but not an *O*."

"Ah, I must steer!" Ambrose stood by the wheel. This made him even happier. He said, "Hem!" and gave her half a spoke. "North-north-east." He read off the binnacle's story and began his scrutiny of her sails. He frowned delicately.

Hardegon cried, "Oh, Lord! Here's where we all go to school. What is it, Captain Cameron?"

"May I bother you?" asked Ambrose. "Just a little—the very littlest bit on that foresheet. Ah, thank you!"

Hardegon nodded to the foresheet gang and they ran forward with laughing glances backward.

The bow watch sang out. A man in the foremast took up his words and passed them on. "Cutter changing course!" And in the next breath, "*Doubloon!* Watch her!"

Both the cutter and the *Doubloon* had taken courses that would carry them to eastward of the *Hind*. The *Doubloon* was doing her best. The cutter was taking her time. She was still so far away that nothing more than the general cut of her jib could be seen.

The answer to the "Now what?" which was uttered in different ways at the *Hind's* wheel, came from aloft in the lookout's "Wu-roo-oo! Wu-roo-oo!"

Hardegon shouted, "He's got it!"

He sprang to the lee rail to get a fair look clear of the sails. He saw the lookout with his arm thrust out to the eastward. He then turned his head and shouted the expected words. "The *Western Star! Western Star!*" Then he yelled, "All hands! All hands!" and, "Hard-a-lee! Oh, lively now! Jump it!"

"Hard-a-lee!" The signal sped through the schooner. The gangs ran to their stations.

Ambrose brought the *Hind* into the wind. From then on, not a word had to be said. The topmastmen had been lying at their stations. They shifted the topsails. The staysail went over after the main and fore. The *Hind* lingered only the right moment in the wind; then she fell swiftly onto the new tack and leaped away. They trimmed her as she flew. She had been handy. Vessel and men had shown all their qualities in the maneuver. Yet the three hundred horses in the *Doubloon's* engine had been at work. She had the lead by half a mile.

Ambrose held the *Hind* to it firmly. Her lee rail went down until it vanished in a green swirl. He eased her and she lifted her pace smartly. The space between her and the *Doubloon* began to shrink. The space between the *Hind* and the cutter closed up faster.

The lookout shouted again. He kept his arm unchanged.

In twenty minutes of furious sailing, Nora, who had climbed into the main rigging, made out the long deck of the *Western Star*. It was awash. A mark-buoy floated astern of her. Its light was out. The mainmast of the *Western Star* stood unharmed. Its stays had held. Nothing remained of her other spars, except a stump forward. There were some ribbons flying here and there. At times, a dark sea gushed out of her main hatch.

But there was life left in that hulk. Her buoyancy had been built into her by the best Yankees that ever knocked a block away; and her precious keel still swung in the tide, a prize to be fought for now by the *Hind* alone. The presence of the Coast Guardsman in that lonely water gave Nora much comfort. Even if this present race was lost, and the *Hind* itself were lost to her, she knew that the end had come to Parran's cruelty and tricks.

Nora took her longing eyes off the *Western Star*. She could now see that the cutter was swinging out a lifeboat. The cutter was so close that she could see her officers crowding the leeward wing of her bridge. They were reading the *Hind's* signal flags.

She saw the door of the *Doubloon's* pilot-house open. A man, whom she judged to be Parran, came out. He looked ahead, then turned and looked at the onrushing *Hind*. The *Hind* was overhauling the *Doubloon*. Even while she watched, she could see the gain. She could even see Parran's face when he shouted an order to his men. Four of the draggermen climbed to the top of her pilot-house and began work on one of the two dories there.

She jumped down and ran to Hardegon's side. "You see that, Dan?"

"Aye!" He thrust her to one side and shouted, "Top dory! Lee side! Swing her out!"

The *Hind* buried her bow into a great roller and coasted over it. She passed hurtling down the valley and flung herself up the next one. She was talking to herself now, talking loudly in an accent full of booms and shrill whistles and some laughter. She hit the spray so hard that she flung rainbows to her gaffs.

Hardegon said to the Lisbon, "Four men to that dory! Two to a thwart. You to steer."

"Aye, Captain!"

"Take your gobsticks. If you get aboard that vessel first, keep that guy off. If you lose, steer away and stand by."

"Gobsticks it is, Captain." He walked forward at a careful pace, striking this man and that on the shoulder as he went, and thus he drew his oarsmen after him.

Hardegon seized Nora by the arm. "Get up there and tell the Lisbon to take on buoys. Five of them. This is going to be a flying set and a tough one."

She hurried away.

The *Hind* burst through another roller and pitched headlong toward the *Western Star*.

The cutter's lifeboat had been lowered. Yet the Guardsmen kept their oars at ready, did not row. An officer, standing at the rail directly above the boat, kept her standing by with his upraised hand. Apparently they had figured out the meaning of the race and had no wish to interfere. Just the same, there was the *Hind's* signal to be considered. A set of flags fluttered on the cutter's halyard.

Hardegon said, "They understand. Haul down on that halyard."

Now the distance between the *Hind* and the *Doubloon* had shrunk to nothing.

"To windward!" Hardegon jerked his hand. Ambrose brought the helm up lightly. The schooner closed up on the *Doubloon's* weather quarter and thrust her bowsprit beyond his main rigging. Inch by inch, she drew ahead.

Hardegon shouted, "It's a dory race now! And what a chance he's got!"

He lifted his right hand and held it aloft until he caught the Lisbon's eye. Yet he withheld the downward signal until he saw the *Doubloon* suddenly veer off and fling her own dory down. Parran himself stood in the sternsheets, his face howling at his men. The dory struck so hard that, for a moment, it vanished. Then it rose out of the trough and the draggermen, yelling ferociously, gave way.

"Dory away!"

Hardegon brought his hand down sharply. The men at the tackle let the dory drop. Others pushed her clear with boathooks.

No man could tell thereafter exactly what happened to the dory. The whole action was lightning fast. A sea spun out from under the *Hind's* plunging bow and the stern of the dory lagged in the lowering. The dory turned over, spilled her five men and whirled bottom-up into the foam.

A howl of triumph blew over the dragger's deck. The cutter's siren began to blow.

Ambrose shouted, "Cutter boat away!"

"Drive her! Drive her!" Hardegon jumped to the wheel to lend his weight. The *Hind* rushed onward, leaving the *Doubloon* and her dory behind.

The watch forward and aloft began to yell like madmen. The men in the bow ran aft with hands upraised. "Hard over, Dan! Hard over!"

Nora ran to the rail. She saw the *Western Star* lying directly in the *Hind's* way. There was less than a foot of her hull showing. She laughed wildly and turned to Hardegon. She ran to him and cried, "Push her, Dan!"

"Stand by!"

Hardegon looked over his shoulder at the *Doubloon's* boat. It was racing alongside the *Hind's* wake. Farther astern, the cutter's boat was picking up the *Hind's* dorymen, who were riding their buoys.

"Haul down!" He had time enough to get the mainsail off. And that was all. Ambrose could give her only a spoke to take some of the mighty drive out of her. In the next instant, the *Hind* crashed into the *Western Star* and slid onto that flowing deck.

The *Hind* reared, groaned and lay quiet. A sea struck her. She leaned a little to leeward and lay quiet again, all her music over.

The moment the vessel careened, Nora went over the rail at the fore rigging. She sprawled on the *Western Star's* deck, which had now gone under the water at that point. She ran to the mainmast and thrust her arm through a hoop that lay there in a tangle of rope yarn and tattered sail.

She flung up her arm and shouted, "The *Hind!* The *Hind's* loose-fish!"

Hardegon said to Ambrose, "Rig the pump! Send a man into the peak. See how she took the rap."

Ambrose replied, " 'Tis only a touch for her, Captain. 'Twasn't as bad as pan ice, no!"

Hardegon called to the bow watch. They followed him to the *Western Star's* deck. He said, "No man puts a foot aboard this vessel. Unless it's the Guard."

The men ranged themselves forward to meet Parran's dory. He stood up in it, making a pretty sight with his blubbering and cursing.

A *Hind* man sang out, "Fit to be tied, ain't ye, Parran? Come aboard this here hull and I'll beat the daylights out of ye!"

Parran spoke to his men. They backed water.

Nora left her place and joined the men forward. She hailed Parran. "Captain Parran!"

He said at once, "Where's Captain Roades?"

"For us to know," answered Nora, "and you to find out!"

Parran at once revealed that he understood Roades was dead. Nora's reply hadn't guided him to that knowledge. No word had been said by her dorymen. Yet there were expressions on all those faces that could be added up. Parran did the sum and slipped awkwardly back into his seat. Nora heard him say, "Boys, Jack Roades is dead! I thought he'd do it."

None of them answered. The bow oar lifted. At this Hardegon shouted, "Parran, you stand by!"

"Stand by?"

"Aye! There's a word to be said to you. And not by me."

CHAPTER XV

THE CAPTAIN CRIES

THE cutter's boat came up. A gray-haired warrant officer stood in the sternsheets. His men backed over the *Western Star's* submerged rail and he came splashing aboard. He said, "The *Hind's* captain?"

"There!" Nora pointed to Hardegon.

Until that moment, the officer hadn't noticed that there was a girl aboard in doryman's togs. The voice informed him. It was not his part to show surprise. He touched his cap and said, "And you, miss?"

"The *Hind's* owner, Nora Doonan."

He faced Hardegon, recognized him, and held out his hand.

Hardegon said, "Glad to see you, Mr. Hanson."

The officer said, "What's the meaning of all this, Captain?"

"It's simple enough—"

"I hope so!" said the officer gravely.

"You're standing on the deck of the old *Western Star*—"

"What?" Hanson looked down in astonishment at the famous ruin.

"Yes! And to make a long story short—for the time being—you've got fifteen thousand dollars' worth of metal under your boots. Her keel! Metal that's much wanted at the Boston Navy Yard."

A seaman with a notebook and a pencil in his hands took his place close to the warrant officer and, just as if he was taking a letter down by a 'longshore bay-window, began writing down answers and replies. "Very good, Forrestall," said the warrant officer. He waited until the notes caught up and then asked, "The *Western Star*? Who is her owner, Captain Hardegon?"

"The owner of the *Hind*."

"Miss Doonan again?"

"Yes."

"And the dragger, Captain Hardegon? Where does she come in?"

"Last!" yelled a *Hind* man.

When the laughter ceased, Hardegon told him how the *Western Star* had been bought by Nora, had been lost in the sou'wester and how she had been found. "The question of the *Star* is to be settled by us, Mr. Hanson. We want the fifteen thousand dollars. The *Star's* papers are—"

"Here!" said Nora, striking her reefer pocket.

"What is the other question then, Captain Hardegon?" asked the warrant. "Not that we can put the *Star* aside so easily."

"The question is one of murder and robbery and piracy!"

"Murder!"

"The captain of the *Hind*—Jack Roades—is dead. One of our hands, John Corkery, was murdered on the *Doubloon* a while back. I saw it!"

Shouts of astonishment rang out on the flowing deck.

"Who killed the captain of the *Hind?*"

"He killed himself."

"Who killed—what was the name of your hand?"

"Corkery, John," repeated the seaman, his eyes on the notebook.

"Two men killed him, Mr. Hanson," replied Hardegon. "Captain Roades was one. Captain Parran"—he pointed to the *Doubloon's* boat—"was the other. I charge him—that man there—with murder!"

Nora said, "I saw the murder, too. I will make the same charge when the time comes."

"The time is now!" The warrant officer took a step toward the *Doubloon's* boat. "Captain Parran, you will go to the cutter."

Parran gave no answer. He stayed hunched in his place, his big head weakly held up. He tried to pump out a word, but nothing came out. A Guardsman left his place and stepped into Parran's dory. The draggermen rowed away to meet the cutter.

The warrant officer, whose memory had been at work despite the job he had on his hands, spoke to Nora. "You are Captain Doonan's granddaughter, aren't you?"

"Yes, Mr. Hanson."

"And how is he? I sailed with him once long ago. On her. As his guest." He nodded toward the half-prostrate *Hind*.

"He is dead. Long since."

"I'm sorry to hear that, miss. He was a fine man and a great sailor." He then tapped his boot against the deck. "And this? How do you propose to handle her? She can't be left here, you know. If anything hit—a destroyer, for example—" He flung out his hands.

"She's tight," said Nora quickly. "She's not lost her buoyancy. She's fifteen thousand dollars for us all. I've already sold her to a Boston man. We'll deliver her!"

"How?"

"With that!" She pointed to the *Hind's* slanted deck. The old handpump, which had been rigged in case the *Hind* had started a plank, was coming down again and Ambrose was making ready to get it into a sling for the transfer.

Mr. Hanson shook his head. "I'm afraid not. It would take you days at"—he shrewdly sized up the pump—"two hundred strokes an hour." He walked over to the gushing hatch and returned. "You must be prepared for a disappointment, Miss Doonan." He looked to Hardegon, as if he preferred to give the bad news to a man. "Captain Hardegon, I'm afraid my captain will order a demolition charge for her. It's too bad. Especially with the metal needed. But she's dangerous. Very dangerous." He looked at his strap-watch and, half to himself, said, "Yet, we've all day before us."

HARDEGON didn't answer. Instead, he caught Nora's eye and gave her a slow, inciting wink, by which he meant, "Make it lively, chum!" He then said to the warrant, "Long cruise you've had, Mr. Hanson."

"Iceland and beyond."

"She looks it!"

"We all look it, I guess." He sighed and added, "On the way home, at last." The sigh was a sign, natural to a man home from the wars, that an interruption of this kind was something of a burden. He spoke again. "Of course, I knew the *Western Star*. I've seen her go in the old days. Fifteen thousand dollars in metal, did you say, Miss Doonan?"

"Fifteen thousand! And more, the way the market's going. But it isn't the fifteen thousand, Mr. Hanson. Not for itself, I mean. It's the money to take the old *Hind* out of hock—that's what we fought and sailed for. Parran's money! And I'll fight it out now!" She pulled out the *Western Star's* papers. "She's no derelict, I tell you! Here's her papers and the transfer and the customs receipt out of Shelburne, where I bought her. Why, there's nothing but a little water in her!"

He burst into laughter, waved the papers aside and asked, "Who's the *Star's* skipper?"

She pointed to old Ambrose. The great campaigner had been ready for inspection. Head flung back, he gravely returned the officer's salute, with wonderful disregard of the water beating at his boots.

Hardegon shifted an inch and winked again at Nora. This time the wink said, "Nice going, chum!"

"Mr. Hanson, sir!" The hail came down in a beautiful roar from the cutter's rail. She had now worked up quite close and her engines were holding her against the tide. It was her captain speaking. He repeated the warrant's name and asked, "How long are you going to linger on that wreck? What's the matter with the *Hind*? Is her captain crazy?"

Mr. Hanson crossed the *Star's* slanted deck and braced himself against her mainmast. He shouted, "The *Hind's* owner is aboard here, sir, and she sends you her compliments and—"

"She? What the devil are you giving us, Hanson? She? She? What she?"

"I tell you, sir, it's a girl!"

Hardegon gave a nod to Nora, who advanced with considerable grace, in view of the splashy circumstances, and waved her hand.

"Not enough!" whispered Hardegon.

Nora pulled off her cap and, by hook or by crook, wrecked her crown of braids so that there was some pretty hair flying.

A roar went up from the cutter's rails and a few shouts came out of her ports. It was surprising, especially in such a hard-working service, that so many jobs were finished just at that moment.

"Do you mean to tell me, Mr. Hanson, that you have a real, live American girl there on that derelict?" Without waiting for a word back, the captain doffed his cap, shook his fist, and roared again. "Take her off this instant, sir! Hurry now!"

THE warrant officer spoke first under his breath. "You leave this to me and I'll get the whole kit and caboodle into Gloucester before Sunday!" He shouted to the captain, "She's the captain and owner of this vessel, sir—the old *Western Star*. Taking a fifteen-thousand-dollar keel home to be melted down for the Navy Yard. She refuses to abandon and she demands assistance. She appeals to the tradition of the Service, sir, and asks you to pull the *Hind* off and leave her alone!"

"The captain? She's the captain of what?"

"Captain of the *Western Star!* Out of Shelburne. Bound for Gloucester."

"What's her name, Mr. Hanson?"

"The *Western Star!*"

"You blockhead! The girl's name!"

"Captain Doonan, sir. Begging your pardon."

"Old Doonan's kid?"

"The same!"

"She's got more brass than her grandfather! And that's a lot!"

"So I gather, sir!"

The cutter captain turned to the officers at his elbow. With some thoughtful glances and head-shakings, they looked the *Star* up and down.

One of them cried out, "The *Hind* taking any water, Hanson?"

"She gave herself a rap, but she's sound. So is this!" He stamped his boot on the deck. "The hull, I mean."

The officers fell to talk again, which was interrupted by the captain's word to Nora. "Captain Doonan!"

"Sir?"

"You tell me yourself, please. What do you want that hulk for?"

She told him. When she had finished, one of the officers said, "I told you so!" in such a loud voice that she could hear him.

The matter was settled, right then and there, by the engineer officer of the cutter. According to the universal law which rules such matters in the watery parts of the world, he was a Scot, or had been, and he spoke Scotch. He cried out to the warrant, "Lass wants yon hulk?"

"Lass do!" replied Mr. Hanson.

"Lass'll have her, then!"

At this, he took his nod from the captain and went down to his black gang and his own pumping gear. The deck officers passed a hawser onto the *Hind* and pulled her off. The *Western Star* came up a few inches. The Guardsmen rigged a ten-inch hosepipe, ran its nozzle down into the *Star's* main hatch, and the pumping began. Before moonrise, they had taken many tons of water out of her. The cutter then took her in tow, still pumping as they plugged along.

The *Hind* ambled along to leeward.

IT WAS late Monday night—not yet Sunday—when the creeping voyage was ended and the *Star's* business was done.

Nora and Hardegon, clad in 'longshore togs again, stood by the great window where earlier generations had watched the *Golden Hind* leave for the Grand Banks. There the generations had awaited her returns, always knowing that her crowded sails would bring her home, rich or poor, pens empty or full. During many a long night, Nora had curled up in that windowseat to watch for the gleam of topsails beyond old Thatcher's two towers. That was a watch she was never to keep again. The *Hind's* sails had been furled forever. A great engine was to do their work henceforth. Her dories had been piled on the Doonan Wharf. They had been the last dories ever to be carried out of Gloucester. The long big-mesh nets would do their work hereafter.

The times had changed. The *Hind,* at last, had changed with them. In her heart, Nora was glad of it. She, too, might now change, might become a woman instead of a workman. Nevertheless, her farewell to the past filled her with a nostalgic sorrow for old times. She turned her head toward the great chair by the firelight, where she had kept her last vigils with that old man who had so fiercely and proudly clung to the past. It was easy for her to summon up the image of Grandfather Doonan, serenely waiting there for the end of his own long watch. She trembled.

Hardegon held her with his arm and whispered, "'Tis all right, Nora! He'd have said 'Yes!' if he knew all that you know."

Hardegon pushed the curtain to one side. He saw the shipyards and the wharves. Beyond the Doonan Wharf, the twin ways of Dunton Yards lay in a blaze of arc lights. He saw forges gleaming and men passing back and forth on two decks—one the *Western Star's,* the other the *Golden Hind's.* Both decks were bare now. To him, they were more beautiful than ever, in this, the end of the old life, the beginning of the new. Even while he watched, a steel giant swung down a black hand and fumbled along the *Hind's* rail.

Despite his knowledge that this had to be, that the change had to come, Captain Hardegon could not keep that same nostalgic pain out of his own heart. The *Hind* had been his sea-home; would be again, yet not the same. He knew how much keener that pain must be in Nora's heart.

He embraced her and made her give her mouth to him. He held her roughly to him until she gave in. He whispered, "The old story, Captain! You want to hear it?"

"I know it. I'll hear it, Dan."

He told and she said, "When?"

"Tomorrow!"

She looked away from the firelight and out of the window.

He saw the giant's hand close on the *Hind's* mighty main-boom. He felt Nora tremble again. He whispered, "Remember what I told you when you started out to save the *Hind?*" She could make no answer. He said, "I told you, 'Captains don't cry!' But here's one—you—that can cry now. For a little while. A very little while."

The steel hand swung the main-boom away into the dark.

"There!" he said. "The old *Hind's* gone! The new *Hind* remains."

The tears came to her cheeks. She cried a little in his arms, like a child who has lost something dear.

He kissed her cheek, lifted his hand and touched her forehead in compassion. He whispered, "Now listen! Listen, chum! Don't you hear what I hear?"

And she did listen until she heard an old man gloriously shout, "Hard-a-lee! Hard-a-lee! Oh, lively now!"

And a beautiful mainsail, shouting its own uproarious anthem, thundered across a certain deck and fell onto the new tack so loudly that she could hardly hear the ancient voice crying, "Ah, that's well, chums! Steady so, the *Hind!*"

THE

END

ASK ADVENTURE

Information you can't get elsewhere

PAY dirt in Northern Quebec and Ontario.

Query:—I am planning to prospect for gold in Northern Quebec and Ontario. Can you give me the following information?

(1) Is the region north of Lake St. John likely to give satisfactory results as to gold?

(2) If not, what region in Northern Quebec or Ontario would be most suitable?

(3) What equipment would be suitable for this territory for a period of time from the 1st of June till the end of September?

(4) Where in Canada can I obtain suitable maps of this territory?

(5) What is the law in Canada in regard to filing claims and what is the nearest claim office in this territory? (Dolbeau—Chicoutini).

—Clare Campbell,
Arvida, P. Q., Canada

Reply by Victor Shaw:—In my opinion, you've picked one of the least promising areas in the Province of Quebec for a prospecting venture after gold; because of its adverse geological history and the fact that up to date no gold has been discovered anywhere in northern Quebec, so far as I'm informed.

Very fine-grained placer gold has long been known to exist in the upper Chaudiere River, chiefly in Beauce County, though no large amount has ever been produced. The most recent placer gold reported was situated in a stream (Big Hollow Brook) on the southeast slope of the Stoke Mts. and in other nearby streams from these mountains, in counties of Richmond, Wolfe and Compton. Placer gold has been known in this area for some 90 years, but the most recent interest there and recovery of gold was in 1937 and 1938, by Stevenson and Davis, of East Angus. Outside of these instances little if any placer or lode gold has been found in all eastern Quebec.

This probably is a result of the immense ice sheet that covered all this region and extended south into Maine and beyond, which acted as a gigantic plow to shave off such auriferous deposits as may have existed down to primary rocks carrying little gold and which also scattered such plowed-up gold all over the southerly regions too fine to be reconcentrated. Maine geology is similar, and no gold of any importance was ever found there.

The fact is that throughout eastern and central Canada practically all gold has been found to occur in the Keewatin and Temiskaming rock formations, and these up to the present are not known to occur anywhere in Eastern Quebec, north or south; although along the western boundary it is possible that an extension may intrude beyond Temiskaming County in a northeasterly direction well south of James Bay. However, your most favorable ground will, I think, be found not far from the Ontario-Quebec boundary around Abitibi Lake and to the southward, and not much north of the Grand Trunk Railway. Between this and James Bay everything is buried too deeply in glacial gravels to offer much chance for prospecting.

You can check on this by writing to the Canadian Geological Survey, Parliament Bldg., Ottawa, and asking for reports on mineral resources of Quebec. They can also furnish maps of almost any portion of this province and they may cost around 25c each, or around that price.

You might also be interested in getting data on Ontario's gold regions, where your chances are far better. This data is given in "Ontario's Mines & Mineral Resources," 6th Edition pub. in 1936, mailed for 25c on request, by Ontario Dep't of Mines, Toronto, Ontario, Canada. They also issue "Prospector's Guide to Ontario Mining Fields," and maps can also be obtained from them. In addition, you'll have to have a copy of the mining laws in force in either province and obtained of the C.G.S. at Ottawa, or from the Ontario Dep't of Mines for that province. You can't stake legal claims, either placer, or lode, without these mining laws to guide you, as they are rather complicated and are strictly enforced.

One provision is that you can't prospect at all without taking out a "free miner's certificate," an annual fee costing $5.00. That is, it used to be that much and is now unless it has been raised lately. I doubt if there are any gold commissioners, or recording offices in your vicinity. Anyway, your best course is to write Ottawa, or Toronto.

I can give full outfit for such a trip, if you insist, but it is better if you get a copy of "Prospecting & Operating Small Gold Placers" by Boericke, priced at $1.50, sold by Mine & Smelter Supply Co., Denver, Colorado. This book gives complete details on outfitting and also field methods of prospecting, as well as working any placer, using mercury, retorting amalgam and selling gold.

(Continued from page 10)

money details cropped up, and the comparatively small sums mentioned—the largest was two thousand francs, about eighty dollars at the time, which he had obtained to bribe a hospital guard in an attempt to escape. The guard had held out for a thousand more, the spy's superiors had refused to come across. It made you sweat and wonder that normally intelligent men would risk, if not death, a long sentence for such sums, that men would betray for pin money.

At about the same time, I ran into the siren in a once famous spying case. She couldn't have coaxed a map of Canarsie from me—but then I was twenty-odd years too late. She had even grown a mustache since. And she told me the story of a nervous little guy, whom she had not even loved, who had wanted to cover her with jewels. Even allowing for the spread of years, that was ambition. He'd got himself caught, and she had been arrested. She had proved that she knew nothing, been released. But she had had to leave town—she'd been mixed up in a treason case, and no member of the armed services would be seen in her company! And, wherever she was, when her identity became known, the military dodged her and the establishments she ran.

Then there was Mata Hari. Buckets of glamor. I once read an article in a national magazine in which a writer claiming to have the inside dope related that she had stepped before the firing-squad garbed in a beautiful fur coat. That she had opened it, revealing herself nude, save for a great display of glittering jewels. The flaws are so easy to point out that it proves how doggedly people crave the romantic details. Mata Hari dressed at Saint-Lazare Prison, supervised by nuns. A little thought would have shown anyone that a person condemned to death, starting for the place of execution, would not be left unguarded a moment. And anyone should know that a prisoner is not permitted to keep jewelry—jewelry is a fine substitute for money. Moreover, at the time of her death, Mata was a couple of years over forty. Years ago, I knew a young chap who had seen the execution—he was with the military guard. The Mata Hari legend was beginning to shape. So I asked him a few questions. He said she had been very calm, as if stunned beyond showing emotion, a rather plain, middle-aged woman in black. She had smiled at the end—but he said, *un sourire forcé*, a forced smile—which is believable.

Then the legend grew, books were written. My friend not only had seen the execution, he had been on the squad! According to the number of drinks, he had fired wide, so as to miss her, shot straight at her heart, because she was responsible for the deaths of many Frenchmen, or closed his eyes and pulled the trigger. Some months later, my friend said he had been in charge of the squad, and had fired the coup de grace, into her skull, when in a fierce mood, into the ground, when he was sentimental. So the legend had reached and finally poisoned him, too!

CARL D. LANE, whose amusing if unconventional bit of Civil War history, "Backhouse Battleship," was in our May issue, provoked the following—

Dear Editor:—

Civil War history has been my hobby for fifty years and I've accumulated a large library of books and articles. My collection includes the memoirs of General U. S. Grant, in two volumes, 1,231 pages in all, written in 1885. As you know, General Grant was in command of the Union forces at the siege of Vicksburg, and, with his characteristic love for details, he has devoted pages 522 to 579 in Volume No. 1 to a minute description of every plan and every move made by all departments of the Union forces, including all ships of all kinds, during that famous siege. Grant did nothing by halves and his memoirs were no exception. The smallest detail which could have a bearing on the final result was not omitted.

Now, it seems inconceivable to me that such an episode or event as is put forth in "Backhouse Battleship" could have been overlooked by General Grant in his memoirs. He was right there day and night and if this incident had really happened and "paved the way to victory at Vicksburg" he most certainly would have known of that important fact. The general wasn't that dumb. Furthermore, he would have laid great stress upon it in his memoirs, inasmuch as he mentions many things of far less importance. The far-reaching benefits received by Grant's army could not have been omitted from his memoirs if they truly happened. Common every-day reasoning and logic tells us that much. Yet, in no instance does the general make the slightest mention of it. It just does not add up.

Another inconsistency in the story is that the old coal barge with a camouflaged super-structure of flimsy material was able to float safely by the concentrated fire of the Confederate shore batteries. A ten-year-old school boy knows that the old barge and its camouflage would have been shot to pieces and utterly destroyed even at night-time before it had gone half way past the batteries. Those Rebs knew how to shoot. Sorry I can't go for the yarn. It's too wild for any stretch of imagination.

Please do not get me wrong. I am fully convinced of Mr. Lane's sincerity in passing the story to us, but I do believe his source of information to be in error. You see, after the war was over, many of the soldiers on both sides came home and, through a desire to impress the home-folks, or maybe a sweetheart, they told some pretty tall stories. Many of these yarns never really happened, but the stories have been handed down from one generation to the next and finally accepted as fact.

Let me add, in closing, that my father was a Confederate soldier and saw the siege from start to finish and I heard him talk of it many times, and if "Backhouse Battleship" had really run the Confederate batteries at night he would have known of it and told me.

Sincerely,
Jas. Thomas.

Mr. Lane, to whom we hastened the above, replies—

Though my critic suggests that it was all a tall story made up to impress the home folks by the returning Yanks and was finally accepted as fact—nevertheless it *is* fact. Mr. Thomas will find the story told in detail in "The History of the Ram Fleet and the Mississippi Marine Brigade" by Warren D. Crandall. Captain Crandall and his boys were the ones who constructed the craft as he shows by anecdote and document.

Now the captain undoubtedly was a sporting man and let us say that he did get hold of some Yazoo bourbon (a snake-bite remedy popular at that period) and invented the story. So let us seek for a more worthy authority. How about Dudley W. Knox who wrote that Bible of naval history, History of the United States Navy (G. P. Putnam, N. Y., 1936)? Captain Knox says on page 252 "—(the Confederates) set about actively to refloat the *Indianola* but on the 27th the work of salvage was hastily abandoned and the vessel destroyed because of the appearance of a craft from the upper river resembling a monitor. The newcomer was in fact only a dummy war vessel built by the Union fleet on an old coal barge, with smoke stacks of pork barrels through which mud furnaces fed smoke. Set adrift above the batteries at dawn she passed through their (Reb) fire uninjured and now unexpectedly drove the little Confederate squadron to the shelter of the Red River. . . ."

Now Captain Knox did not see this with his own eyes. Let us further assume that the episode came to him as a tall tale of the war. But Captain Knox is a careful and accurate historian and takes pain to quote his authorities. Thus we find, on page 263, under "Principal References" he gives the following unimpeachable authority: (1) Official Records of the Union and Confederate Navies, published by the Navy Department, (2) The Gulf and Inland Waters, by Admiral A. T. Mahan, (3) Admiral Farragut, by the same official historian of the United States Navy.

You will note that the facts of my article adhere faithfully to the details of the official version of the episode. However, I do thank Mr. Thomas for not questioning the fact of the backhouse itself. Even his dubious General Grant—if I understand the general correctly—would have caught that!

Any son's or daughters of U.C.V.'s or G. A. R.'s who want to add to the testimony?—K.S.W.

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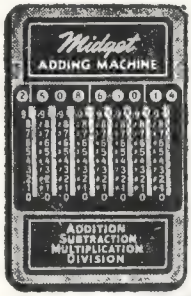

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Old Songs—ROBERT WHITE, 913 W. 7th St., Los Angeles, Calif.

Rifles, Pistols, Revolvers: *Foreign and American*—DONEGAN WIGGINS, 170 Liberty Rd., Salem, Oregon.

Shotguns, American and Foreign: Wing Shooting and Field Trails—ROY S. TINNEY, care of *Adventure.*

Small Boating: *Skiffs, outboard, small launch, river and lake cruising*—RAYMOND S. SPEARS, Inglewood, Calif.

Swimming—LOUIS DEB. HANDLEY, 115 West 11th St., N. Y., N. Y.

Swords, Spears, Pole Arms and Armor—MAJOR R. E. GARDNER, care of *Adventure.*

Track—JACKSON SCHOLZ, R. D. No. 1, Doylestown, Pa.

Woodcraft—PAUL M. FINK, Jonesboro, Tenn.

Wrestling—MURL E. THRUSH, New York Athletic Club, 59th St. and 7th Ave., N. Y., N. Y.

Yachting—A. R. KNAUER, 6720 Jeffery Ave., Chicago, Ill.

SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNICAL SUBJECTS

Anthropology: *American, north of the Panama Canal, customs, dress, architecture; pottery and decorative arts, weapons and implements, fetishism, social divisions*—ARTHUR WOODWARD, Los Angeles Museum, Exposition Park, Los Angeles, Calif.

Aviation: *Airplanes, airships, airways and landing fields, contests, aero clubs, insurance, laws, licenses, operating data, schools, foreign activities, publications, parachutes, gliders*—MAJOR FALK HARMEL, 709 Longfellow St., Washington, D. C.

Entomology: *Insects and spiders; venomous and disease-carrying insects*—DR. S. W. FROST, 465 E. Foster Ave., State College, Penna.

Forestry, North American: *The U. S. Forestry Service, our national forests, conservation and use*—A. H. CARHART, c/o *Adventure.*

Forestry, Tropical: *Tropical forests and products*—WM. R. BARBOUR, care of U. S. Forest Service, Glenn Bldg., Atlanta, Ga.

Herpetology: *Reptiles and amphibians*—CLIFFORD H. POPE, care of *Adventure.*

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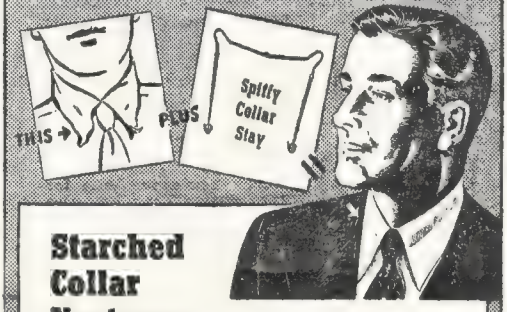

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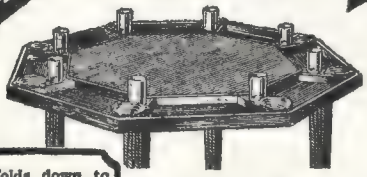

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Ornithology: *Birds; their habits and distribution*—DAVIS QUINN, 5 Minerva Pl., Bronx, N. Y.

Photography: *Outfitting, work in out-of-the-way places; general information*—PAUL L. ANDERSON, 36 Washington St., East Orange, N. J.

Radio: *Telegraphy, telephony, history, receiver construction, portable sets*—DONALD MCNICOL, care of *Adventure.*

Railroads: *In the United States, Mexico and Canada*—R. T. NEWMAN, 701 N. Main St., Paris, Ill.

Sawmilling—HAPSBURG LIEBE, care of *Adventure.*

Sunken Treasure: *Treasure ships; deep-sea diving; salvage operations and equipment*—LIEUTENANT HARRY E. RIESSENBERG, care of *Adventure.*

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Wildcrafting and Trapping—RAYMOND S. SPEARS, Inglewood, Calif.

MILITARY, NAVAL AND POLICE

Federal Investigation Activities: *Secret Service, etc.*—FRANCIS H. BENT, care of *Adventure.*

The Merchant Marine—GORDON MACALLISTER, care of *Adventure.*

Royal Canadian Mounted Police—ALEC CAVADAS, King Edward High School, Vancouver, B. C.

State Police—FRANCIS H. BENT, care of *Adventure.*

U. S. Marine Corps—LIEUT. COL. F. W. HOPKINS, care of *Adventure.*

U. S. Navy—LIEUTENANT DURAND KIEFER, care of *Adventure.*

GEOGRAPHICAL SUBJECTS

Philippine Islands—BUCK CONNER, Conner Field, Quartzsite, Ariz.

★**New Guinea**—L. P. B. ARMIT, care of *Adventure.*

★**New Zealand, Cook Island, Samoa**—TOM L. MILLS, 27 Bowen St., Feilding, New Zealand.

★**Australia and Tasmania**—ALAN FOLEY, 243 Elizabeth St., Sydney, Australia.

★**South Sea Islands**—WILLIAM MCCREADIE, No. 1 Flat "Scarborough," 88 Sidney Rd., N. S. W., Australia.

Hawaii—JOHN SNELL, Deputy Administrator, Defense Savings Staff, 1055 Bishop St., Honolulu, T. H.

Madagascar—RALPH LINTON, Dept. of Anthropology, Columbia University, N. Y., N. Y.

Africa, Part 1 ★*Libya, Morocco, Egypt, Tunis, Algeria, Anglo-Egyptian Sudan*—CAPT. H. W. EADES, 3808 West 26th Ave., Vancouver, B. C. **2** *Abyssinia, Italian Somaliland, British Somali Coast Protectorate, Eritrea, Uganda, Tanganyika, Kenya*—GORDON MACCREAGH, 2231 W. Harbor Drive, St. Petersburg, Florida. **3** *Tripoli, Sahara caravans*—CAPTAIN BEVERLY-GIDDINGS, care of *Adventure.* **4** *Bechuanaland, Southwest Africa, Angola, Belgian Congo, Egyptian Sudan and French West Africa*—MAJOR S. L. GLENISTER, care of *Adventure.* **5** ★*Cape Province, Orange Free State, Natal, Zululand, Transvaal, Rhodesia*—PETER FRANKLIN, Box 1491, Durban, Natal, So. Africa.

Asia, Part 1 ★*Siam, Malay States, Straits Settlements, Java, Sumatra, Dutch East Indies, Ceylon*—V. B. WINDLE, care of *Adventure*. **2** *French Indo-China, Hong Kong, Macao, Tibet; Southern, Eastern and Central China*—SEWARD S. CRAMER, care of *Adventure*. **4** *Persia, Arabia*—CAPTAIN BEVERLY-GIDDINGS, care of *Adventure*. **5** ★*Palestine*—CAPTAIN H. W. EADES, 3808 West 26th Ave., Vancouver, B. C.

Europe, Part 1 *Denmark, Germany, Scandinavia*—G. I. COLBRON, care of *Adventure*.

Central America—ROBERT SPIERS BENJAMIN, care of *Adventure*.

South America, Part 1 *Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Bolivia, and Chile*—EDGAR YOUNG, care of *Adventure*.

★**West Indies**—JOHN B. LEFFINGWELL, Box 1383, Nueva Gerona, Isle of Pines, Cuba.

Iceland—G. I. COLBRON, care of *Adventure*.

Baffinland and Greenland—VICTOR SHAW, care of *Adventure*.

Labrador—WILMOT T. DEBELL, care of *Adventure*.

Mexico, Part 1 *Northern Border States*—J. W. WHITEAKER, 2903 San Gabriel St., Austin, Tex. **2** *Quintana Roo, Yucatan Campeche*—CAPTAIN W. RUSSELL SHEETS, care of *Adventure*.

Canada, Part 1 ★*Southeastern Quebec*—WILLIAM MACMILLAN, 89 Laurentide Ave., Quebec, Canada. **3** ★*Ottawa Valley and Southeastern Ontario*—HARRY M. MOORE, *The Courier Advocate*, Trenton Ont., Canada. **4** ★*Georgian Bay and Southern Ontario, National Parks Camping*—A. D. L. ROBINSON, 103 Wembly Rd. (Forest Hill), Toronto, Ont., Canada. **5** ★*Yukon, British Columbia and Alberta*—C. PLOWDEN, Plowden Bay, Howe Sound, B. C. **6** ★*Northern Saskatchewan; Indian life and language, hunting, trapping*—H. S. M. KEMP, 501—10th St., E., Prince Albert, Sask.

Alaska—THEODORE S. SOLOMONS, 6520 Romaine St., Hollywood, Calif.

Western U. S., Part 1 *Pacific Coast States*—FRANK WINCH, care of *Adventure*. **3** *New Mexico; Indians, etc.*—H. F. ROBINSON, 1211 W. Roma Ave., Albuquerque, N. M. **4** *Nevada, Montana and Northern Rockies*—FRED W. EGELSTON, Elks' Home, Elko, Nev. **5** *Idaho and environs*—R. T. NEWMAN, 701 N. Main St., Paris, Ill. **6** *Arizona, Utah*—C. C. ANDERSON, care of *Adventure*. **7** *Texas, Oklahoma*—J. W. WHITEAKER, 2903 San Gabriel St., Austin, Tex.

Middle Western U. S., Part 2 *Ohio River and Tributaries and Mississippi River*—GEO. A. ZERR, 31 Cannon St., Pittsburgh, 5, Penna. **3** *Lower Mississippi from St. Louis down, Louisiana swamps, St. Francis, Arkansas Bottom*—RAYMOND S. SPEARS, Inglewood, Calif.

Eastern U. S., Part 1 *Maine*—"CHIEF" STANWOOD, East Sullivan, Me. **2** *Vt., N. H., Conn., R. I., Mass.*—HOWARD R. VOIGHT, 40 Chapel St., Woodmont, Conn. **3** *Adirondacks, New York*—RAYMOND S. SPEARS, Inglewood, Calif. **5** *Ala., Tenn., Miss., N. C.; S. C., Fla. Ga.*—HAPSBURG LIEBE, care of *Adventure*. **6** *The Great Smokies and Appalachian Mountains south of Virginia*—PAUL M. FINK, Jonesboro, Tenn.

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(Continued from page 93)

He got a big kick out of playing little jokes like that.

I used to let him ramble around headquarters as he pleased, so long as he didn't take a notion to stroll into the house. He seldom wandered more than twenty rods from the barns. Sometimes he'd have a lot of fun not letting me catch him. If I wasn't in a hurry, I'd play along for a spell and we'd have quite a little game. But if I was in a hurry or Billy saw that I was getting peeved, he'd stop his playing and walk right up to me.

How did he know when I was not in a fooling mood? He figured that out himself one day, and he never forgot.

One hot afternoon when I'd finished greasing the windmill, I sat down on the little platform about sixty feet above the ground to roll me a smoke and cool off a mite. Billy was loafing in the shade down below near the water tank. As I stared out over the rolling, sun-scorched range I saw a thin wisp of smoke on the horizon. In that country at that time of year, a prairie fire was the thing we most feared. I yelped, *"Fire! Fire!"* and damned near ran plumb off that platform before recollecting that there were about sixty feet of the wide open spaces between me and the ground. I went down that ladder pronto.

My sudden bellowing had waked Billy from his siesta. When he saw me sprinting toward him he got the notion to play with me. So he started prancing and strutting around in circles, shaking his head, laying back his ears, kicking up his heels and laughing to beat hell.

I was so mad I could have brained him. Cussing a streak of sulphur, I headed for the barn. I reckon Billy must have stopped and stared after me in hurt bewilderment. Anyhow, it dawned on that horse that this was the wrong time for horseplay.

I was just swinging my saddle onto the back of one of the mules in the barn when a gray streak shot in through the open doorway and just about knocked that poor mule off his feet crowding into the stall between us. All I had to do was lower my arms, pull up the cinches and grab a bridle—and Billy and I were ready to go.

Maybe one of these here Army-college psychologists can explain that without admitting a horse like Billy can reason. But he can't explain it to me.

THE END

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NOTE: We offer this department to readers who wish to get in touch again with friends or acquaintances separated by years or chance. Give your own name and full address. Please notify *Adventure* immediately should you establish contact with the person you are seeking. Space permitting, each inquiry addressed to *Lost Trails* will be run in three consecutive issues. Requests by and for women are declined, as not considered effective in a magazine published for men. *Adventure* also will decline any notice that may not seem a sincere effort to recover an old friendship, or that may not seem suitable to the editors for any other reason. No charge is made for publication of notices.

Anyone knowing the whereabouts of Herbert A. Roig—forty-three years old, five feet ten inches tall, weighs a hundred and fifty pounds, gray eyes, brown hair, last heard of in 1939 in Houston, Texas—please communicate with his friend Frank Landon, 1146 Webster St., San Francisco 15, Calif.

"Captain" Wood Briggs was last heard of in 1924 when he was a lecturer on the Elliott White Chautaqua Circuit. He lived then at 6205 Geary St., San Francisco, Calif. Anyone knowing his present whereabouts please write Jack Bowman, P. O. Box 431, Little Rock, Ark.

If anybody has any information regarding Luther (Red) Wright, who some years ago lived in Independence, Mo., and later moved to Joplin, Mo., would they please get in touch with Pfc. Elvin Clyde Hancock, Jr., USMC, MDNAS, Hitchcock, Texas. Wright was a close friend of my father's and I would like to find out about his son, who is about the same age as myself and was a friend of mine.

Anyone knowing the whereabouts of Louis Dworak, born July 26, 1919 in Meriden, Conn., left home in Paterson, N. J., in August 1938. Last heard from in Chicago heading West. Had worked in rodeo which went bankrupt in Miami, Fla. Christmas of 1937. Please notify Joseph J. Dworak Cox, Fire Dept. B, Camp Peary, Va.

Would like to hear from Bill Daly from El Paso, Texas. He is a salesman of automobiles and automobile parts. Very important. J. L. Hobson, 633½ West 85 St., Los Angeles 44, Calif.

William J. Smith, age 51 years, light blue eyes, dark brown hair, height 6 ft., last heard of in State of Washington. He was born in Montesano, Wash., and spent school days in Grants Pass, Ore. Anyone knowing his whereabouts please communicate with his brother-in-law, C. E. Baker, 968 Neilson St., Berkeley 6, Calif.

Midwest Radio Corporation—since 1920, famous for fine radios, and their factory-to-you selling plan with savings up to 50%—looks to the post-war future. To build the kind of radio you want, they ask you now to submit a letter on the subject: "What I Want In My Post-War Radio." For the 11 best letters, Midwest will give $1,000.00 in War Bonds. Letters must not exceed 200 words and you may send as many entries as you wish. Letters will be judged on the practical value of the ideas contained therein and the decision of the judges will be final. In case of ties, duplicate prizes will be awarded. All entries must be postmarked not later than midnight December 31, 1944. Contest is open to all except employees of Midwest Radio Corporation, their advertising agency, and members of their families. Winners will be notified on January 31, 1945. Prizes will be awarded as follows:

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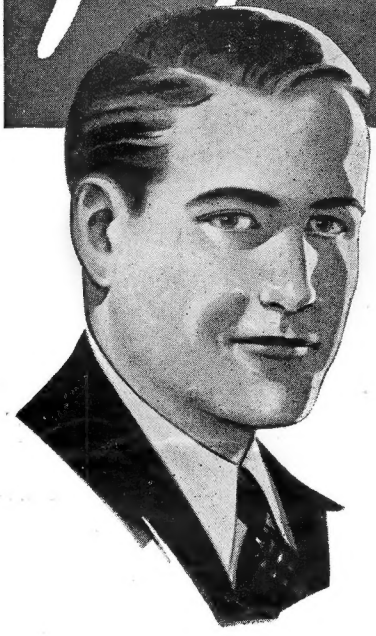

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PANATES is different—it not only contains a powerful supply of "Anti-Gray Hair" Vitamins but "staff-of-life" Vitamin (E) Wheat Germ Oil as well. Panates is not a hair dye. You have nothing to fear . . . no mess, no fuss. You can test safe, healthful Panates whether you now dye your hair or not, because Panates Vitamins work from within to check gray spread and literally feed natural color back into the hair roots.

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